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BY

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CHAPTER I

THE hand-bell ringers were ringing a tune with peal so sounding and melodious that no one heard the street door open. The ringers, some standing and some kneeling in a circle in the stone-flagged hall, were deftly setting down and picking up their bells; the servants were gathered together in the kitchen doorway; and on the further side of the hall the drawing-room door stood open.

Lancelot, reclining his little body on the broad balustrading of the staircase, gazing down upon the lighted hall, was suddenly aware of a white stranger. He stood against the front door, behind the circle of ringers, dressed in a long white mackintosh; his broad hat and the muffling which hid his face were crusted with snow, and twinkling flakes of melting snow powdered his shoulders. So he stood while the jolly bells chimed and rang the next verse; and to Lance's excited little imagination this mysterious visitor had stepped from out the Christmas Carol book and had stolen through the snowy night into his father's house. The stranger looked up at the little boy and nodded at him in a friendly way, and his strong voice struck recklessly into the tune as he came forward, passing below Lance, and reaching out a hand to him.

"Where 's your father, Tyke? Take me to him, there 's a good nephew."

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Lance slipped to the floor and trotted to the drawing-room door. The room was lighted only by two tall Yule candles burning on the mantel-piece; and a small, brown-bearded clergyman was reposing in an arm-chair beside the wood-fire. Lance, peering round the door, saw his father start upright in his chair with a face of terror.

"Gracious heavens!" said the clergyman.

"Why, Charlie, do you take me for a ghost?" cried the stranger.

"Dick—it's Dick!" said the little clergyman, jumping up. The brothers-in-law shook hands. "How brown you are!" the Reverend Charles went on delightedly. "How are you? How did you get here? We never expected you until next week."

"We had a quick run, and I came straight through, so as to arrive on Christmas Eve. That's the proper day for the prodigal to arrive on, is n't it?"

"Of course," said the parson. "Lance, run and tell cook to bring supper for your Uncle Dick at once."

"Why do you wear a dog-collar, Charles?" his new uncle was inquiring when Lance came back. "You never used to."

"It's clerical, it's comfortable—look at the girth—it saves washing, you can't see the join, and it's High Church," said the Reverend Charles, fingering the circlet of thin brass sheathed in linen, which was his own invention. "I wear a jewelled stole now—you shall see me wear it on the next festival."

"Shall I?" said Uncle Dick. "Hullo, here's the Tyke. Come here, nephew, and let me have a look at you."

Uncle Dick, Lance thought, was a very handsome man, with his bright eyes, heavy mustache, and his sun-browned face.

"How old are you, Tyke?" said Uncle Dick.

"Nine," said the boy.

"You've grown since I saw you," said the uncle.

"I knew you'd say that," retorted his nephew. "You'd be surprised if I had n't grown, would n't you?"

"Tyke," said Uncle Dick, "do you know who I am? I am the fairy uncle from the back of beyond, who has come home to make all your fortunes."

And Lance, who had met this hero in more than one story-book, went to bed highly excited, because he knew his father to be a poor man.

"He's not like his poor mother—not like a Thornhaigh, is he? He's more like you, Charles," said Uncle Dick, when they were alone.

"And yet," said the Reverend Charles, "I sometimes seem to trace in him a strain of poor Maria's temperament."

"Cheer up, Charles," said Uncle Dick, filling his glass. "He's young yet, and you have him all to yourself."

"I did n't mean that at all, Dick," the clergyman mildly protested.

"I can't tell you how much I esteemed and respected Maria's ascetic force of character. I miss her very much."

"Of course," said Richard Thornhaigh, with gravity. "But I want to talk to you about business, Charles—the business as to which I wrote you."

"Oh, yes, so you did. I remember the letter, now you mention it. Something about a gold mine, was n't it? Do you know, Dick, I distrust Australian gold mines. It 's instinct, I suppose."

"I should think you did," cried Uncle Dick. "And if you knew as much about them as I do, you 'd sicken at the word. No, sir. My business is legitimate. I am agent for the Westralian Amalgamated Trust and Investment Company."

"You think that 's a good thing?" inquired the parson dubiously.

"I do. I do indeed. I put all I had into it—and here I am, as confidential agent. The shares are not on the open market—we don't want all the world to rush in. It 's a snug investment, Charles. Fifteen per cent. How does that strike you?"

"It strikes me as fishy—to be candid," returned the Reverend Charles. "But we 'll go into it to-morrow after breakfast, when my brain is fresh and clear. I own I am on the lookout for a profitable investment—indeed, we all are, from the Dean downward. The recent depreciation of land and—what they call—agricultural depression have seriously affected the Cathedral revenues, Dick. Dean Venables has been obliged to restrict his hospitality; and I heard he was actually putting down a man-servant."

"Well," said Uncle Dick, "I want to stay with you a bit, and do a little business for our mutual accommodation—what?"

"Stay as long as you like, and the longer the better, business or no business," said the Reverend Charles heartily.

The way to Uncle Dick's bedroom lay through Lancelot's sleeping-chamber. The two men paused, the Reverend Charles shading the light with his hand, and looked at the boy curled up and sound asleep. Richard Thornhaigh slipped a sovereign into the little stocking, bulging with gifts, which was tied to the bed-rail, and went into his room.

Over his mantel-piece hung a photograph of his dead sister, Maria; the presentment of a dark, hard woman, with tight black hair strained over the temples and twisted into a heavy chignon behind. When the Reverend Charles had left his guest to himself, Uncle Dick held the candle to the set features and looked closely at them.

"So you 're in Heaven, Maria," he said. "Really, I think it 's the place for you. How you did hate me, to be sure! And jealous too, because you thought I should lead the gentle Charles astray."

He set down the candle, went to the window, and drew aside the curtain.

Directly opposite the window, a white causeway led between high walls, to a flight of steps, above which a pair of wooden doors opened beneath an archway upon the Cathedral graveyard. One door was open, and the black oblong yawned beneath the snowy trees that overhung the archway from the further side. Beyond, the twin towers of the Cathedral glimmered, snow-encrusted, against myriad flashing stars.

"I wonder," thought Uncle Dick, "what I have come six thousand miles to find in this ancient, frozen city. Well, well, things will be as they must, men will drive and strive, and God help the hindmost, *I* say." And with that he went to bed.

Lancelot took his uncle out for a walk a few days after the arrival of that prospective benefactor. The wind blew sharply through the narrow streets of the old, steep city and the beaten snow in the roads and footways made a mottled, slippery surface.

They followed round the stone wall, some fifteen feet high, once the city wall, which closed in Mrs. Warrilow's garden, and turned up the steep hill to the right. Keeping still upon the right hand, you may turn into the north door of the Cathedral; or, if you turn to the left, the High Street leads you curving up to the Market-place. Thus, the shortest way from Saint Catherine's Gate to the High Street lay not round by the road but up the steps and through the doorway upon which Uncle Dick had looked out upon the night of his arrival, thence through the south door and the Cathedral itself.

When they returned from an exploration of the town, Lance guided his uncle around by the Deanery. The Dean, a slender, gaitered gentleman, with a large hat nestling upon a profusion of black and curling locks, was carefully closing the nail-studded door in the high wall behind him as the uncle and nephew approached.

"Ah, Mr. Thornhaigh," said the Dean affably, offering his hand as he spoke, to Uncle Dick, whose acquaintance he had already made. "I trust, sir, that you are experiencing no ill effects from your extended sea-voyage. We are a chilly city and a bleak and windy city, sir," went on Mr. Dean volubly, without noticing Uncle Dick's politely murmured reply, "but, though we are cold without, we are warm within—the northern characteristic, Mr. Thornhaigh, the northern characteristic!"

Mr. Thornhaigh was understood to observe that such a characteristic was, on the whole, the best of all characteristics.

"Have you seen our Cathedral yet?" continued Mr. Dean, turning to the huge cliff of building that towered immediately above them. "We consider our Cathedral to be one of the most interesting and marvellous monuments bequeathed to us by those wonderful mediæval times so grossly miscalled the Dark Ages. If *that* was darkness, then I should pray, Give us more of that darkness," said Mr. Dean, with surprising energy. "I don't know if you care for the relics of antiquity,

Mr. Thornhaigh; but if you do—if you are interested, sir—it would afford me great pleasure to go with you round the Cathedral some time."

All the while he poured out his words, the little gentleman with the thin legs fidgeted from one foot to the other, and beat his hands restlessly together, his pale, eager face mobile as a monkey's, and his bright black eyes looking up at Uncle Dick's bronzed countenance. Uncle Dick, who beheld in the Very Reverend the Dean a possible investor in the Westralian Amalgamated, expressed his delight at this proposal.

As Mr. Dean left them, there emerged from the building a tall clergyman and a lady dressed and veiled in black. They stood together in conversation for a moment, then the clergyman, lifting his round, hard hat with broad brim and tassel (mark of the High Churchman), passed the uncle and nephew, with a nod of recognition to the boy. He was a black-bearded, swarthy man, with a hanging under-lip.

"Who 's that feller?" asked Uncle Dick, gazing after the lean black figure with some appearance of distaste.

"That 's Canon Glossop," his nephew replied. "I don't like him. I think he 's a brute, somehow—but I admire his sermons. His daughter Dolly," added the boy, "goes to the same school where I learn drawing."

At the bottom of the declivity, the road, after branching into Saint Catherine's Gate, led on towards Anglers' Green and the river. Half way there, on the right, stood a range of low buildings with round-arched doors and windows, like a mosque, all painted a cheerful yellow.

"That 's the school," said Lance. "Miss Starling lives in the front part, and the back is school-rooms, then there 's a big garden."

Uncle Dick surveyed the round-arched yellow building with the same attention with which he looked at everything in Northborough. In answer to his questions Lance told him that Miss Starling was a lady of some thirty or perhaps sixty years of age, and of a very kind nature; that she had started her school within the last year or two; and that she gave a good many dinners. Uncle Dick's mental notes upon this information might have been summarized thus: Maiden lady, tired of living alone, invested all her capital in school, anxious to possess social recognition and probably expending more than she can afford in attempts to obtain it. Another possible investor.

As they reached the door of Saint Catherine's Lodge, the Reverend Charles Crane, clad in cap and gown, turned out of the gateway leading to the Choir School. The Reverend Charles wore the fagged and worried aspect resulting from two hours' contention with the Choir School, of which he was master.

"Choir-boys are the worst boys in the world, I verily believe," said the Reverend Charles.

"But I thought you were going to send the Tyke here to the Choir School," said Uncle Dick.

"We must cut our coat according to our cloth," said the parson.

"Well, I've never been a choir-boy, thank God!" said Uncle Dick. "But I should say that some things were n't worth some other things. When 's he going to start in?"

"At the half-term, I think," said his father; and Lance was immediately transported with joy.

"Take my advice, Charles, and send him to a good school," said Uncle Dick, when his nephew was out of the way. "Choir-schools are the devil, you know as well as I do. If I 'd been sent to a good school, I should n't be where I am."

"That 's a common delusion, Dick. Besides, I have n't the money. The Cathedral pays me a mere pittance."

"There 's the Amalgamated," said Dick. "Fifteen per cent., Charles. Come!"

"Well, he must begin in the choir. I promised the Dean," said the Reverend Charles. "Afterwards we 'll see." And so it was settled.

CHAPTER II

"Now, what, Mr. Thornhaigh," said Mr. Dean, striking an attitude, with his right hand to his chin, and his left foot advanced, the toe pointing upwards—"what is your opinion upon that crack?"

Mr. Dean, Uncle Dick, and his nephew were standing in the Cathedral, opposite the wall-arcading of the south wall of the choir aisle, contemplating an ominous fissure which severed a column of marble, and extended diagonally across the stonework.

"I should say, Mr. Dean," replied Uncle Dick solemnly, "that there was some kind of a settlement going on."

"Do you know," said Mr. Dean, facing round upon Uncle Dick with extraordinary animation, "that 's exactly what Mr. Inkpen, our Cathedral architect, tells me? A settlement—a dangerous settlement! And the distressing thing is, Mr. Thornhaigh, that the Cathedral has really no funds available to preserve the venerable structure in decent repair, decent repair. But I was about to point out to you, Mr. Thornhaigh, the singular beauty of the Early English foliage to these capitals—commonly called the Stiff-Leaf foliage, to distinguish it from the later debased varieties, when the sculptor's mind began to forsake the purely conventional to riot in the merely meretricious—an example of what I mean may be seen in the tomb of Abbot Stephen Hagberg." The little Dean trotted down the aisle to the richly decorated tomb where beneath a traceried canopy the Abbot's stone effigy slumbered with folded hands.

"Poor Abbot Stephen!" cried Mr. Dean. "His lines, Mr. Thornhaigh, fell in stony places—his lot was cast in times not unlike our own, when the Cathedral revenues were much reduced. But his poverty was

entirely due to the rapacity of Henry the Eighth; nevertheless, he contrived to complete the twin towers, working at them, it is said, with his own sacred hands, daily from prime to nones. But to be candid, it has always been a mystery to me, Mr. Thornhaigh, where the money came from, even reckoning the tax he imposed upon every pound of butter and every dozen of eggs sold in the market-place, which earned for him the sobriquet of Stephen Butter-penny."

"Perhaps he mortgaged the whole edifice for the pew-rents. That's rather a brilliant idea—what?" said Uncle Dick.

"My good sir, mortgage! Mortgage the temple of God! Impossible, Mr. Thornhaigh!" cried the Dean. "I fear quite unthinkable, sir."

"Of course—stupid of me," said Uncle Dick hastily; but the Dean was already plunged in the full tide of discourse once more.

"No—as I was saying, Mr. Thornhaigh, the puzzle of where Abbot Hagberg got his money has never yet been solved, nor, in all likelihood, will it ever be solved. It is well known that before the dissolution of the monasteries the Abbey of Northborough Cross was among the richest of the northern foundations, until their wealth was confiscated and their lands taken away; and yet we find building operations continued without intermission upon a great scale, and large sums expended upon the Minster, which flowed from some secret source. Ah!" cried Mr. Dean, stretching a hand towards the recumbent stone figure, "could these cold lips speak and reveal the secret source!"

"Perhaps there's some of the money left, Mr. Dean," suggested Lance eagerly.

"I have often dreamed of it. But where?" said the Dean, taking the suggestion with perfect seriousness.

Lance thought that if he were Mr. Dean, he would dig for it in certain places that he had in his eye; but he said nothing.

"A little judicious investment, nowadays, might at least prove an equivalent to the butter-tax," remarked Uncle Dick.

Lancelot, taken with an idea, slipped away and sought his friend, Mr. Pottel, Head Verger. Mr. Pottel, tall, bland, and clean-shaven, clad irreproachably in black, with something of the air of a family physician and something of the family butler, stood warming his comfortable presence beside the big corrugated stove in the nave.

"Take me to the crypt, Mr. Pottel, please," said Lance.

"And what might you be wanting in the crypt, in particular, Master Lancelot?" inquired Mr. Pottel.

"I've got business there," said Lance. "The Dean told me to ask you," he added experimentally.

"Did he indeed, Master Lancelot? Now, that's curious, sir, because Mr. Dean said to me only this morning, he says, 'Pottel, on no account allow Master Lancelot in the crypt.' What do you make of

that, sir?" says Pottel, also experimentally, jingling his keys, with a benevolent smile.

"Never mind the Dean. Do come just this once, Pottel. I'll take the responsibility;" and Mr. Pottel, having relieved himself of his pleasantry, weakly consents.

Lance made a tour of the crypt, came back to the Head Verger, and announced himself ready to go. As they emerged into the echoing nave, they were met by the Dean and Uncle Dick.

"Master Lancelot has been about a little particular business of his own in the crypt, sir," observed Mr. Pottel deferentially.

"And what have you discovered, young man, hey?" said the Dean, to Lance's annoyance. He was upon the trail of a discovery; but he had no desire to talk about it. "Let us come to lunch," said Mr. Dean, without waiting for an answer.

At the luncheon table appeared Mrs. Dean, a worn, silent little lady, and Miss Dean, who wore black ringlets, like her father's clerical curls, and spectacles, and whose sharp nose was just touched with a rosy frost at the tip; Mr. Bland, vicar of one of the subordinate parishes in Northborough Cross, whose kind, mild countenance peered forth from a ferocious bushy beard; and Miss Rosina Starling, a lady of middle age, with a plain, vivacious countenance, and coils of fading auburn hair. Lance observed her with curiosity. He had known Miss Starling hitherto only in her professional capacity, as the head mistress—the indulgent head mistress—of the seminary for young ladies whose drawing-classes Lance attended, and he wondered how Miss Starling would appear in society.

Mr. Dean, who had been talking all the morning, had scarcely said grace before he was launched again and again in full sail.

"As I was saying to my friend, Mr. Thornhaigh," Mr. Dean began, "we are all in want of a benefactor. That great and venerable institution in which our lives are so bound up, with whose welfare our own welfare may be said to be intimately connected—I mean the Cathedral—gazes reproachfully at us in its decay. To-day, I inquire of the universe, where is that benefactor? Where is the wealthy merchant who would make his thank-offering to the Heaven which has blessed the labor of his hand and brain? Where," cried Mr. Dean, smoothing the long hair from his little brow with an excited hand, "is the castled lord who would fain leave an enduring memorial of his piety?"

"They seem to think English railways and consols more attractive investments," remarked Uncle Dick.

"The Spirit of Mammon, my dear sir," said Mr. Dean, "own brother to the Spirit of Antichrist!"

"I sometimes think that our strength in the present juncture should lie in sitting still, Mr. Dean," said Mr. Bland. "Times change, and

circumstances, which now seem against us in material matters, may presently turn in our favor."

"Ah, I fear you have more faith than I, Bland," said Mr. Dean. "I can never sit still. It 's a lesson I can't learn!"

"'They also serve——'" Miss Starling put in, glancing quickly about the table. "Do they not?" she added sweetly; and Lance decided that Miss Starling had been anxiously waiting for an opportunity to distinguish herself, and that she was nervous in this exalted company.

"One cannot always take one's Milton too literally, can one?" Miss Dean spoke with excessive quickness and a beaming smile.

"Doubtless the statement embodies a profound truth," her father broke in. "Still, I maintain, we are waiting for a benefactor. And when we come to think of it, are we not all, in our several ways, personally and individually, waiting for a benefactor? May it not be said of you, Miss Starling, that a benefactor who would handsomely endow, in the sacred name of education, your—ah—establishment, would be fulfilling your earnest desire?"

"Indeed, Mr. Dean, I cannot deny it." Miss Starling again rises to the occasion. "And I am sure you feel with me that the cause of education, and especially female education, is sacred indeed. If your benefactor should appear, I fear I should feel inclined to quarrel with you for his possession."

Uncle Dick, seated next to Mrs. Dean, was a good deal harassed, both by the unfamiliar manner of speech, and by the string of trivial questions whose infliction was Mrs. Dean's unfailing method of entertaining a guest; but it seemed to Uncle Dick that one thing was plain: These people all wanted money.

This deduction consoled him for the ordeal of that luncheon-party.

CHAPTER III

Lancelot had been more idle and insubordinate than usual during his drawing-class at Miss Starling's seminary; and in order to distract the attention of his reproachful conscience, he was escorting Dolly Glossop home to her father's house in the North Alley, which descends to the left from the High Street as you go towards the Market-place.

"Supposing you could exchange fathers, would you?" asked Dolly.

Lance considered the matter for a moment. "No, I would n't. Would you?"

"Yes, I would," said Dolly, with emphasis. "I 'm afraid of my father. Sometimes I think I almost hate him."

"I 'm not a bit afraid of mine," said Lance. "He 's not so very strict, and he does n't get cross—hardly ever, that is—even when I deserve it."

"I love your father. I think he's perfect," said Dolly.

They were passing the north door of the Cathedral, whence a few sedate ladies and one or two old men were emerging into the frosty twilight, starred with lamps and the kindly gleam of fire-lit windows. The evening service was ended, and the pealing of the organ sounded from within the great dark building. A lady, dressed in black, detached herself from the scanty crowd and came up to the children.

"I saw you the other day, Eleanor, when I was walking with my Uncle Dick. You were talking to Canon Glossop," said Lance, who was privileged to address the lady of his childish affection by her Christian name.

"Do come home with us to tea, Eleanor," said Dolly. "Then you can talk to Papa afterwards."

"Oh, yes, Eleanor, *do* come—*I'm* coming," said Lance.

With a child pulling at each hand Miss Warrilow yielded; and they had tea in the gaunt drawing-room where Mrs. Glossop lived all her days. For the Canon's wife had been an invalid for many years. She was a woman of austere opinions, to whom self-denial was the rule of life. Seen in repose, she seemed to brood sternly upon wrong and sorrow; but at a word her face would light with a patient look of active kindness. With a countenance so lighted, Mrs. Glossop was conversing with her guests, when her husband, the Canon, entered the room; and Lancelot, who was busy, as usual, with his own observations, saw the brooding, watchful expression settle like a cloud upon Mrs. Glossop, while at the same moment the subtle flicker of pleasure seemed to pass upon Miss Warrilow's pale face as she shook hands with the Canon. The clergyman took his tea from his wife's hand without a word and without looking at her. Standing on the hearth-rug, his back half turned upon his wife, he talked to Miss Warrilow, while his grotesque shadow quivered and gesticulated upon the opposite wall. Lance, seated beside his friend Eleanor, stared up in silence at the bearded countenance with the loose under-lip. Presently he became fascinated by the man's eyes. There was something wrong about the Canon's eyes. Whether it was the boy's fancy, or the play of the firelight, it seemed to Lance that the shifty eyes that glanced at him and glanced away were like the eyes of a beast, such as he had once seen in a travelling circus.

Finding the conversation totally uninteresting, Lance presently went to Mrs. Glossop and bade her good-night. As he shook hands reluctantly with the Canon, he noted that the clergyman's hand was dry and trembling. Miss Warrilow, to his delight, said she would go home with him; and the Canon escorted them to the front door.

"Oh, Canon Glossop," said Miss Warrilow, stopping on the threshold, "I should so like to borrow that book you mentioned, if I might—'The Crystal Gates,' was n't it?"

"By all means," said the Canon. "I will lend it you with very great pleasure. If you will have the kindness to come into my study for a moment, I will find it."

"I will be back in a moment, Lance," said Miss Warrilow.

Lance, who was stamping impatiently in the street, had the pleasure of seeing the door shut upon him by the Canon, and, at that, he suddenly lost his temper.

"Glossop," said Lance, aloud to the dark street, "you're a brute, and a beast—and a fool. Just you wait till I'm a little older, Glossop. Just you wait, that's all! I'll"—he paused to invent appropriate indignities; and became so absorbed in their imaginary infliction that he fell silent, glowering at the shut door through the darkness.

"I shall wait here if she keeps me until to-morrow morning," said Lance. He pulled his collar about his ears, thrust his hands in his pockets, and trotted to and fro on the frosty cobbles. After some ten minutes of this exercise, Lance stopped again, glaring at the door.

"It's always jaw, jaw, jaw, with old Glossop, and never a minute's peace. She can't get away. But I never saw him talk to his wife. That's funny." Lance paused to consider this discovery. "I don't care," he went on. "He thinks he's got rid of me. He thinks I've gone home, does old Glossop. Well, I shall simply stay here all night."

A step rang on the cobbles, and Uncle Dick came round the corner.

"Hullo, Tyke! Whom are you talking to?"

"Myself," said Lance. "And if old Glossop would talk more to his beastly self, and less to other people, it would be better for him. Here I've been waiting about two hours for Miss Warrilow, to take her home, just because he's jawing inside."

"Well, you run home, old chap. I'll wait for the lady," said Uncle Dick, who had lately dined at the house of Warrilow.

"I shan't," returned his nephew.

"All right, then, I'll go home instead," said Uncle Dick with perfect good-humor.

As he disappeared into the darkness, the door opened and Miss Warrilow came out.

"Lance, is that you? Oh, you poor boy, I am so sorry! I thought you would have run home long ago."

"I don't ever 'run' home," retorted Lance sulkily. "Besides, you said you would be back in a moment. It was n't your fault, of course," he added, recovering somewhat as he walked beside his friend. "I know what a beast old Glossop is."

"My dear Lance, you must n't talk like that. Some day I hope you will know Canon Glossop better." The neat gloved hand tightened its grasp upon the boy's hand. "If ever you are left alone in the world, Lance, I hope you will know what it is to find a friend." Eleanor's

voice was charged with some unintelligible emotion which worried Lance, while he sympathized vaguely. He said nothing; but he wished people would be more rational, as he trotted along by his friend's side through the lighted High Street.

At the corner by the Cathedral the pair were joined by Uncle Dick, who saved Lance all further efforts of conversation for the rest of the way; and the boy thought that his friend's trouble, whatever it was, presently lightened before Uncle Dick's gay talk, so that, when they left Eleanor at her door, he was consoled.

"Father's having a tea-party to-night," said Lance, as he entered the house with his uncle. "Are you going into the drawing-room?"

"Who 's there?"

"Oh, there 'll be Miss Buttermere, and Mrs. Bland, and Miss Mulcaster, and Miss Starling, and Mrs. Sawle, and there 's sure to be Mrs. Venables——"

"That 'll do," said Uncle Dick. "What an extraordinary number of ladies there are in this town!"

A servant, entering the hall, told Lancelot that he was expected in the drawing-room.

"If any one asks for me, Tyke, say I 'm out," said Uncle Dick, and he disappeared into the conservatory.

There were but two ladies, Mrs. Venables, the Dean's wife, and Miss Starling, the school-mistress, in the drawing-room, as Lance entered, though the relics of tea and muffins seemed to betoken the recent dispersal of a larger company.

"Talking of investments—— Where 's your uncle, Lance?" said his father.

"He 's out," said Lance.

"How do you know?"

"I saw him in the town when I was out just now," said Lance.

"What a pity!" said the Reverend Charles, turning to the two ladies. "I had hoped my brother-in-law, who is, I believe, an astute man of business, would have explained to us the details of a really excellent investment. The matter, of course, is not one to be generally mentioned; but I am sure—since you have asked my opinion on the subject, Mrs. Venables—that my brother-in-law can have no objection to your knowing."

"The Dean would be most interested," said Mrs. Venables. "The Cathedral finances are in such a deplorable condition. Perhaps Mr. Thornhaigh would be kind enough to come and see the Dean."

"I am sure of it," said the Reverend Charles, inwardly pluming himself on his diplomatic talent.

"And I am very much interested in the matter of investments, as you know, who have been so kind in advising me," put in Miss

Starling. "Perhaps you would bring Mr. Thornhaigh to a little lunch some day when you are not too busy?"

The Reverend Charles congratulated himself on having paved the way upon which his brother-in-law might proceed to secure two more shareholders in the Westralian Amalgamated Trust and Investment Company. He had already, induced by Uncle Dick's glittering representations, backed by a persuasive array of figures, invested his own savings in the concern; and every shareholder "introduced" by the Reverend Charles brought him a small commission.

Upon meeting Canon Glossop after morning service in the Cathedral, the next day, the Reverend Charles thus tactically addressed him.

"By the way, Glossop, you have been so kind to me in the matter of my private affairs, that I should like to put a little financial opportunity before you, which has come my way through my brother-in-law's good offices."

The black-bearded man with the hanging under-lip gazed at the Reverend Charles with a face as dull as a sheep. An observer would have said that the Canon's mind was heavily preoccupied.

"Tell me about it," he said, after an appreciable interval of silence, and he began to walk slowly down the vast echoing nave.

Pacing to and fro beside the Canon, the Reverend Charles involved himself in a statement of such intricacy that he presently became aware of his own complete bewilderment. "I could n't have grasped this thing quite as clearly as I intended," thought Mr. Crane, and he glanced sideways at his companion. But the Canon's swarthy features remained vacant of all expression.

"I fear I am not so lucid on some points as I could wish, but I know it 's all right," said Mr. Crane, aloud. "But my brother-in-law——"

"You must let me think over it at leisure, Crane," said the Canon, "and we 'll talk over the matter again—with—whom did you say?—yes, I beg your pardon, your brother-in-law, of course. Yes, certainly."

Uncle Dick came up at the moment, and was introduced to Canon Glossop, whom he regarded keenly. The Canon, after shaking hands, made some excuse and hurried away. "I 've just been recommending the Amalgamated to Glossop," said the Reverend Charles. "By the way, he 's trustee for Lancelot's money under his poor mother's marriage settlement—I don't know if I told you."

"What 's the matter with his eyes?" asked Uncle Dick.

"With his eyes? Oh, yes, his eyes? That 's the result of his neurotic diathesis. He 's a martyr to it, poor man."

"His *what*?"

"Neurotic diathesis—a nervous affection of the brain, I 'm told."

"Oh, indeed," said Uncle Dick.

CHAPTER IV

THE middle of the Easter term of the Choir School was approaching when one day, growing weary of playing in the garden, Lance went out, ascended into the lighted town, and walked into the office of his friend, Mr. Inkpen, architect and Cathedral surveyor.

Mr. Inkpen was a meagre old man, with a sour red face and a sour tongue; but Lance understood him, and the two were friends. In his youth, Mr. Inkpen had been educated to believe that Greek architecture was the only architecture in the world; then, in middle life, he was drawn into the fanatic circle of the Gothic Revivalists; and very soon there was no more fanatical Goth among them all than Thomas Inkpen. Then, in the evening of his days, Thomas Inkpen, F.S.A., etc., etc., was appointed Surveyor to the fabric of Northborough Cross Cathedral; and this veteran Visigoth devoted himself to his charge as a lover to his mistress. He measured up the whole Cathedral, and recorded the same in a complete series of small-scale drawings. This occupied him the better part of four years. Then he began all over again, with a set of drawings to a larger scale. He hoped, finally, to draw all detail actual size, so that, if the Cathedral were disastrously burned to the ground, a second cathedral precisely the same as the first might be rebuilt immediately from the records of the faithful craftsman, Thomas Inkpen. Now he lived for two ambitions: he ardently desired to restore the ruined and decayed parts of the Cathedral to their former beauty, and when he died, he would be buried under the Cathedral roof.

Lance found the old gentleman bent over his drawing-board, the gas-light gleaming upon his thick white hair, a cup of tea and a plate of cakes at his elbow. Mr. Inkpen abhorred the use of tobacco; and, like many men of this persuasion, he retained the sweet tooth of childhood. Lance always admired Mr. Inkpen's astuteness in having made his office in the rooms above the pastry-cook's shop.

"Well, Lancelot, and how do you do? Have a cup of tea, my boy, and a cake. Young people like cakes, so I've heard." The old gentleman held his head on one side and screwed up his eyes when he spoke, and his voice sounded as if he were on the point of weeping. "Help yourself, help yourself, there's plenty more downstairs," said Mr. Inkpen; and he bent once more over his work.

Lance perched himself on a high stool, and munched his victuals, and sniffed the mingled odor of tracing paper and India ink, and listened to the click and fall of instruments on the board, and watched the patient draughtsman at his work. Lance thought it would be a sad fate to bend over a board and rule hard lines all day long.

"You know an awful lot about the Cathedral, don't you, Mr. Inkpen?" said Lance presently.

"Why do you ask, boy?" said the architect, in his peevish tones.

"Because I should like to learn about it, too," said Lance.

"Well, why don't you learn, then? There's the Cathedral"—the old man jerked his thumb savagely over his shoulder. "Go and learn."

"I thought you'd help me, Mr. Inkpen," said Lance plaintively. "I want to know about the crypt, to begin with."

Mr. Inkpen frowned at the boy over his spectacles; then he slid nimbly off his stool, went to a press, and pulled out a drawer, from which he took a large drawing.

"Here's the plan of the crypt," said he, spreading it on the desk. "Do you know what a plan is? No? Well, a great many grown people don't, neither; and what's more, they won't confess it; and what's more, they ain't ashamed of their ignorance. A plan, boy, is a horizontal section, and a section is a cutting. If I," continued the old man, with the appearance of the utmost irritation—"if I were a giant, and you were a bird—do you see, boy? Very well. Then if I were to slice through the walls of this room with a big knife at the level of the window-sill," said Mr. Inkpen, gesticulating with a T-square, "and if I then lifted the roof off, and you were a bird hovering in the air above, what you saw, looking down when the roof was off, would be a plan of the room. Do you understand? If not, think over it till you do. A giant with a knife, and a bird. Tell me when you're ready."

Mr. Inkpen crouched over his board while Lance thought it out.

"I'm ready, sir," said Lance, when he had grasped the idea.

"If you're quite sure, then look at the plan of the crypt. The black parts are the walls," and the old man, with every mark of impatience, patiently explained the diagram to the boy.

"I want your leave to go into the crypt when I like. Do let me, Mr. Inkpen."

"You really want to learn something about the place?" asked the old man suspiciously.

"Yes, I do really, sir."

"Very well, you must ask the Dean. I've no objection, provided you don't get into mischief. Now, good-night, my boy, good-night."

The Dean—good, innocent little man—when Lance, fortified with Mr. Inkpen's word, begged his leave to study architecture in the crypt, yielded an easy assent.

But the day soon came when Lancelot must leave these pleasant distractions to enter upon the battle of life.

All honeycombed and sullied, the snow still lies in ridges on either side of the hilly streets, when Lance takes his place in the Choir School as a scholar. The old, gaunt school-room, with its sour smell of ink and row of massive, battered desks, is deadly cold; the very blackboard, with the names chalked upon it of those boys who had rebelled most obstinately

against Mr. Thursby, the assistant master, on the preceding afternoon, presents a frozen appearance.

The Reverend Charles Crane, clad in cap and gown, enters as the chimes of the Cathedral clock, striking nine, fall from on high without the old schoolhouse. Five minutes are devoted to prayers; then the Reverend Charles addresses those boys whose names are written on the board, in terms of sorrowful rebuke.

Having delivered his little homily, the choir-master conducts lessons until a quarter to ten; when the whole school flocks riotously into the Cathedral to bear its part in the morning service.

After the service, the boys were allowed a break of a quarter of an hour. Then lessons were resumed in the Choir School and continued until half-past twelve. The Reverend Charles went home, and work for the boys began again at two o'clock, under Mr. Thursby, a young man of excessively respectable demeanor, who had climbed up the ladder of government examination to this excessively respectable position. And while the rest of the school disported itself in the walled playground behind the school-house, Lance spent his time in the crypt.

Thither would Mr. Pottel, silently protestant, conduct him; and there would he stay until he was tired of groping in the obscure nooks and corners, piled with ruins and rubbish, of that vast cavern. The presence of his friend the Head Verger embarrassed Lance, who wanted to borrow, or convey, a spade from one of the workmen who were always employed about the building, and dig therewith in likely places, to see what he could find. A boy of any imagination is persuaded that all ruins and antique buildings must needs hold treasure-trove concealed; and Lance had it firmly in his mind to discover some secret hoard, wherewith he would enrich whomsoever he chose. But the Head Verger's bland pertinacity had nearly caused this harmless enterprise to be abandoned; when Lancelot, groping in a little space behind a heap of stony rubbish at the far end of the crypt, found the foliated stone jambs and mullions of an ancient window, built into the wall.

"Where are we, Mr. Pottel?" asked Lance.

"Immediately beneath the little chapel opening out of the south transept, Master Lancelot. It is thought on 'igh authority that the window, which you now see is bricked up, at one time lighted a corresponding chapel down here in the crypt. The ground outside, though 'igher than it used to be, still does not rise much above the sill in that particular place." Thus the explanatory Pottel, not knowing what he said. For Lance instantly conceived a plan which should secure an independent access to the crypt.

The graveyard outside, at the angle formed by the junction of the south transept with the nave, sloped steeply in some five or six feet of green bank to the level of the sill of the old window; and that part

of the graveyard, lying high above the roof of the Choir School and the houses of Saint Catherine's Gate, was remote from observation and seldom visited; so that a choir-boy might easily turn the corner of the transept unobserved, and disappear down the bank. These strategic dispositions were carefully noted by Lance; he also observed that the bricks which filled in the window where once was glass, were rotten, and the mortar loose. The intermittent industry of a week or two made a hole in the brickwork through which he could pass into the crypt. Within, the opening was concealed by the heap of stone and mortar fragments; and after each visit he piled the bricks neatly in the gap. The door by which Pottel entered the crypt was at the further end; and should he appear, there was plenty of time to escape. Lance found half a pick-axe, with the helve attached, somewhere about the precincts, and an old spade that looked as if it might not be missed, and began his explorations.

These times of digging in the dark were times of enchantment to Lance. To enter by stealth through a window into the huge chamber, to grope for his hidden tools like a prisoner whose life depended upon his evading the gaoler's scrutiny, to toil alone in the gloom upon the track of hidden treasure, closed about with the profound tranquillity of centuries, made for Lance an adventure of pure intoxication.

At every stroke of the spade, he hearkened for the dull jar of iron upon gold or silver vessels, whose jewels winked dully through their crust of earth; in the eye of imagination, the flagons and chalices of the sanctuary, coined money in bags or worm-eaten boxes, rusting armor, bones and rings and weapons, lay plain to see, deep in the brown, friable mould. One more stroke, or yet one more, and Lance would stand upon the pinnacle of utmost expectation.

Meanwhile, Lance had discovered, in common with his fellows, that Mr. Thursby, in times of riot, was as a reed shaken by the wind.

Mr. Thursby was long-suffering; but, upon a day of sustained outrage, he fell upon the class with the cane, laying about him left and right, striking indiscriminately upon the head and hands. Only Lance he left untouched; but Lance's name appeared the next morning upon the blackboard in solitary disgrace.

"I hope you are ashamed, Lance," was all Mr. Crane said, when he entered; but when Lance went home after school he spent the rest of the day in the enforced retirement of bed.

"I told you how it would be," said Uncle Dick to the Reverend Charles. "Example? Example be blowed! How can you expect the smallest boy in the school to set an example to all the young roughs in Northborough? How much example did you set, for instance, at his age—what?"

When he returned to his burrowing, Lance, like all adventurers, came to an obstacle. A great slab of stone barred his progress; and

beneath that rock (he was persuaded) the way opened which should lead him on to fortune. Lance dug a trench about the slab, only to find it mortared upon a stone foundation. Clearly the miner must have recourse to strategy; and Lance went for a walk in order to invent a scheme at leisure.

Lance went to his favorite haunt, which lay some two miles beyond the town. Here the bare uplands were cleft by a little valley, thick with trees, where were sedgy nooks, and bramble thickets, and, in the midst, a tall cliff of yellow sandstone. On his way, Lance heard the dull report of an explosion, and he began to run; they were blasting in the quarry; and as he came in sight of the riven cliff, with the huge blocks of stone scattered upon the pile of broken fragments sloping to its base, Lance was seized with an inspiration. He found the foreman of the gang of quarrymen, and manifested so intelligent an interest in the art of quarrying, that the man kindly explained the process. Lance thanked the foreman politely, bade him good-night, and left the quarry, going ostensibly in the direction of Northborough Cross. Once among the trees, he turned aside, and proceeded with infinite craft, crawling upon his stomach in the approved manner whenever the ground permitted him to do so, and taking care to avoid treading upon dried twigs.

The hut where the quarrymen cooked their meals, and where all their gear was stored, stood a little way from the quarry, set about with trees. No one was there; the door was open; and presently Lance was heading swiftly for home, his pockets stuffed with blasting powder, and a length of fuse wound about his body under his waistcoat. Lance hid his munitions in the crypt, and went home to tea in a state of exaltation.

The next day, being a Saints' Day, was a half-holiday in the Choir School. Lance, eaten up with impatience, went directly to the crypt after morning school. By dinner-time his work was done.

That afternoon, Lance was required to attend evening service in the place of a fellow choir-boy. By some mysterious calculation he reckoned that the fuse would burn for at least two hours; and within an hour and a half the Cathedral would be closed for the night. And so, unable to contain himself, Lancelot fired the fuse before he went into the vestry.

The service came to its melodious end, and Mr. Pottel, majestically gowned, the silver poker of his office inclining upon his shoulder, rose up from his seat beneath the reading-desk, and stood in the aisle, waiting until Canon Glossop should have finished his private prayer.

The black-bearded Canon turns to the eastward and murmurs the appointed ascription; there follows the multitudinous rustle of the congregation relaxing itself to listen; and the preacher begins his discourse. He begins in a tone scarce rising above a whisper, so that presently his hearers are all straining to catch his words; when their

attention is wholly engaged, the orator will bring melodious thunder and harmless lightning about their heads, with gushing intervals of healing and sweet rain.

To Lance, the pale face of Eleanor Warrilow, sitting opposite to him, detaches itself from the bed of listening faces, set in a black field. Her face, and the succession of colored pictures, presented by the preacher's eloquence and the gray mystery of the Cathedral, blend and blur together in his mind, and he falls asleep. In his sleep, his thoughts run into dreams; he is journeying up a rocky steep, that pale face beside his own, towards high and shining battlements, crowned with a bright cloud, which opens and reveals the Minster towers, white as milk upon the blue; then comes a clap of thunder, the tower sways, the shining walls are split in twain, and Lance awakes in wild terror. The preacher's voice has ceased; frightened people are rising in their seats; a confusion of people is streaming out upon the aisle; and a pungent reek of smoke is in the air. Lance, scrambling to his feet with the rest of the boys, glances up at the pulpit, and beholds a crumpled heap of surplice and a black head, prone upon the sill, which reminds him, for a passing instant, of an incident in the life of Mr. Punch. He is possessed with some vague conviction that part of one of the towers has fallen; moving with the rest, he finds himself in the nave, where the Reverend Charles orders the boys to go home without disrobing; he runs out into the moist darkness in his surplice, and sees the twin towers looming black upon the stars; and a dreadful conviction clutches at his heart.

There are some disasters for which a clean shrift makes the swiftest remedy; Lance had half-an-hour to consider the situation before his father returned from the Cathedral. Mr. Crane was charged with dismal suspicions; but Lance hastened to anticipate his father's questions, plunging immediately into a full confession. Having made an end, he backed instinctively towards the door.

"Where are you going?" demanded the Reverend Charles.

"Out—I thought," faltered Lance, who, now that the worst was over, was eager to visit the scene of his exploit.

"You will go to bed, my son, and remain there until I tell you to get up," said his father, with great severity. "I must think what can be done with you. Ordinary methods seem to fail in the most extraordinary way."

Lancelot's pillow was wet with most unwonted tears that night. But after a while he cheered up, and lay thinking. He remembered the sudden, inglorious collapse of the Reverend Canon Glossop; and grinned to himself in the dark.

Meanwhile, his father, taken with a sudden resolution, was writing to the head-master of the preparatory school where he himself had been educated; and soon Lancelot was transferred to that genteel academy.

CHAPTER V

In the days that followed Lancelot's departure, Uncle Dick went much into society. The Very Reverend the Dean invited Mr. Thornhaigh to dinner; so did the Chapter; and so it was that Uncle Dick was made one of that eminently exclusive body known to the other coteries of Northborough Cross as the Cathedral clique. The town used to say that the Cathedral was uppish in its ways; the county, that the Cathedral was narrow in its ideas; but the three were very good friends, on the whole; and Uncle Dick, by the exercise of a little discretion, enjoyed the confidence of all.

Mr. Thornhaigh opened an account at Greenway & Totterdell's, the local bank; and old Mr. Greenway invited Mr. Thornhaigh to take pot-luck with him, whenever Mr. Thornhaigh felt himself so disposed. Our leading ironmonger, who lived among green fields in a Gothic villa (designed by Mr. Inkpen), a little way out of the town, hoped that Mr. Thornhaigh would take him as he found him, together with a neck of mutton and a tolerable glass of port. Farmer Todmorden offered Mr. Thornhaigh a goodish mount for the next meet; and Lord Almondbury, Master of the Hunt, sent Mr. Thornhaigh a card for the Hunt Ball.

Uncle Dick opened a little office, over the saddler's in the High Street, for convenience in transacting the business of the Westralian Amalgamated Trust and Investment Company. Business came slowly, but still it came; and the shares of the Amalgamated rose steadily in value. Mr. Greenway, the banker, old-established, universally-respected, declared in his bank-parlor that in his opinion the investment, though undoubtedly speculative, was, *for* a speculative investment, sound, sir, sound.

One morning there entered to Uncle Dick, sitting in his offices, a bulky gentleman with a military air, a red face, a fierce eye, bristling gray hair, and a drooping gray mustache. He was dressed in a suit of vivid check, and wore a square bowler hat slightly cocked over one eye.

"Good morning, sir. You don't know me—you don't know me—but I know you," said the military gentleman, using a swift and abrupt manner of utterance. "With your leave, I introduce myself—Major Gorges—Tristram Gorges—Major Tristram Gorges, at your service. Uncommon name, sir. None the worse for that. Easy to remember."

The Major shook hands warmly with Uncle Dick, sat down, placed his hat on the floor, his gloves beside his hat, and his rattan cane beside his gloves; and produced a silk handkerchief of great size, with which he polished his glowing countenance.

"Trade under name of Beersheba—John Beersheba," resumed the Major, fixing his little blue eyes sternly upon Uncle Dick. "Telegraphic address, Beersheba, London. *Now* d' you know me, sir?"

"Of course," said Uncle Dick, recognizing a financier famous in the city of London. "Glad to meet you, Major."

"Gladness mutual, sir. Passing through on way to Scotland, thought a little business possible. Eh? How's business, Mr. Thornhaigh? How is the Amalgamated?"

Mr. Thornhaigh handed the Company's balance-sheet to his visitor, who glanced at it slightly, and enclosed it in a thick pocket-book secured by a strap.

"Fact is, Mr. Thornhaigh," said the Major, "I had a little scheme in my noddle, with regard to your Company, if you'd care to hear it. By the way, I suppose you have a certain amount of influence with your directors—eh?"

"I manage the Company affairs on this side the water, to a great extent, certainly," said Uncle Dick.

"Quite so," said the Major. "Companies's one-man business, after all, I often think, like everything else. Well, sir. Now, you're doing well, but (excuse me) you might be doing better. You might, indeed. I'm certain of it. And I'm prepared to show you how."

And the Major proceeded to explain a neat scheme for blamelessly increasing riches. He was, it seemed, ready to float a company (to be called the Southern Consolidated Investments Company, Limited), to purchase the Westralian Amalgamated Trust and Investment Company, with a capital of one hundred and eighty thousand pounds. Of this amount, sixty thousand pounds were to be reserved for working capital; the Amalgamated was to receive another sixty thousand in fully paid shares; and the remaining sixty thousand would be appropriated by Major Tristram Gorges, in consideration of his services in getting together a Board of Directors, and of his bearing the preliminary expenses incurred in forming the new company.

"And where do I come in?" asked Uncle Dick.

"What's the capital of the present company? Twenty thousand. Very good. For every share you now hold, my dear sir, you, in common with the other shareholders, would be allotted three shares. Besides, you might occupy an official position, with salary at proportionate rate. Now, sir! How's that? Eh?"

"I'll think of it," said Uncle Dick.

"And let me know. Good. Come to lunch," said the Major, with surprising swiftness of transition.

Uncle Dick did think of it. He did more. He made investigations into the past history and present position of Major Tristram Gorges; and he found that the Major's methods of business (however speculative) had hitherto resulted in a series of remarkable successes. Major Gorges himself was reputed to be worth one or two millions; and almost every concern in which he had dealt had prospered.

So it was that the Westralian Amalgamated was wound up, and those of the shareholders who did not sell their shares to the new Company were allotted three shares in the Southern Consolidated for each one they had in the Amalgamated. And, as most of the shareholders were of Uncle Dick's friends and acquaintance, and accustomed to be guided by his counsel, most of them not only retained their original shares but after a while invested in more. The Very Reverend the Dean and my Lord Almondbury kindly consented to allow their names to figure in the list of directors at the head of the prospectus; and Major Tristram Gorges, to show his appreciation of this act of condescension, forced upon the acceptance of these gentlemen certain checks for some thousands of pounds; which, he explained, were merely the customary directors' fees, paid in advance—to save trouble.

CHAPTER VI

The Reverend Vyvyan Glossop sat alone in his study, a prey to neurotic diathesis. That is to say, the clergyman was huddled together in his arm-chair, his eyes closed, his head sunk on his breast, his lean fingers twining in his black beard. A fire burned in the grate, though the summer sun was hot upon the window, and a strong beam struck upon the embers, turning them to ash, the hue of which matched, in a ghastly manner, the color of the Reverend Canon's twitching countenance. There came a knock at the door, and the Canon leaped in his chair, and his eyes opened. They had a curious glassy appearance as he turned his dull glance upon the servant standing in the doorway.

"Mrs. Penfold to see you, sir."

"I have nothing to say to Mrs. Penfold." The clergyman's voice was harsh with acute irritation. "What does she want?"

"Only to see you a moment, sir, she said, if it was n't troubling you too much. She would n't keep you, not a minute, sir."

"Tell her to go away. I—er—I have nothing to say to Mrs. Penfold. Tell her I am engaged. And—here, stay—if Mrs. Penfold comes again, I am not at home. You understand—not at home."

The servant gone, Mr. Glossop sat hunched in his chair, blinking at the fire, his under-lip trembling. Presently he took from an inner pocket of his clerical waistcoat (a vesture apparently seamless and buttonless) a little case containing a needle-syringe. Then he rolled up his coat-sleeve, baring a corded arm, peppered with tiny red scars, and applied the injection.

Outside, the impartial glare of the sun, lighting upon the figure of a woman as she turned away from the Canon's nail-studded door, struck into prominence the bunch of crimson roses that burned in the woman's hand. Mrs. Penfold turned the corner of North Wynd, into

the shadow; then she leaned her arms upon the blank wall, and hid her face upon them. In this posture she was descried by Uncle Dick, who, clad in a suit of light gray tweeds, a scarlet tie, and a straw hat (slightly tilted upon one side) with a white ribbon, was strolling up from the lower town.

"What 's the trouble?" said Uncle Dick, stopping beside the bowed figure.

"Please to go away," said Mrs. Penfold, without raising her head. "There 's nothing the matter."

"Don't tell me," said Uncle Dick. "Come! The sun 's been a little too much for you. Now, you know me—my name 's Richard Thornhaigh—so just take my arm, and tell me where you live, and you 'll permit me to see you home—like a sensible creature."

Mrs. Penfold raised her face, deformed with weeping. She had light brown eyes, large and round, and the braids of her brown hair drooped about her temples.

"Oh, I know who you are, Mr. Thornhaigh, to be sure," said she, "but you must n't trouble, sir. I was only a little overtook. I 'm better now, sir, and thank you."

"You 'd be better still if you had a little rest out of the sun, don't you think so?" said Uncle Dick. "That 's Canon Glossop's house, and I 'm sure Mrs. Glossop——"

"I would n't cross the door of the Reverend Glossop's, not for a million million pounds in gold, I would n't," interrupted Mrs. Penfold.

"All right, if you 'd rather not," said Uncle Dick, inwardly astonished. "Give me your arm—that 's right—and we 'll go home. Shall we," asked Uncle Dick, noting the worn gold circlet on the work-hardened finger, "find your husband in?"

Walking bashfully linked to Uncle Dick, Mrs. Penfold explained that her husband was a commercial gentleman, travelling in the fur rug and sealskin line, who was seldom at home for more than a Sunday once a month or so; and Uncle Dick somehow gained an impression that Mr. Penfold was not a man of a sympathetic nature. From his experience of commercial gentlemen, Uncle Dick projected a fancy portrait of Mr. Penfold, fur-coated, red-faced, loud, and smoking a cigar with a flashy label round it; and he was sorry for Mrs. Penfold. When they reached the house, one of many houses in a long street of a deadly uniformity, she begged Uncle Dick's acceptance of the roses she carried in her hand.

"I plucked them myself this morning, in my friend the market-gardener's, and they were all wet with the dew," said Mrs. Penfold. "And thank you kindly, sir, I 'm sure, for your goodness."

Uncle Dick stuck a rose in his buttonhole, and walked leisurely back to his office. As he passed up the North Wynd, he cocked an eye

at the three-sided, brick projection of the Canon's house where it descended upon the sloping line of the causeway, with two windows peering from under the eaves, like secret eyes. "That dusty red house knows a lot of shady stories, I'll swear," said Uncle Dick. "It seems I came upon the fag-end of one to-day. Wonder what's going on in there this minute."

Had Uncle Dick but known it, there was an informal confessional going on, and the penitent was none other than Miss Eleanor Warrilow. For, while Uncle Dick was taking Mrs. Penfold home, Eleanor Warrilow had brought a case of conscience to Canon Glossop's enlightening counsel.

The Canon Glossop who greeted Eleanor was a very different clergyman from the shaking, irritable, clay-visaged wreck which, but a few minutes before, had so roughly dismissed Mrs. Penfold.

His eyes were bright (unless you looked closely into them, you would fail to observe that the pupils were dilated), the patch of swarthy skin above the black beard was suffused with red, and his hanging underlip was steady.

"I have had," said Eleanor, "a delightful letter from Lancelot, this morning. He seems to take very kindly to his new school."

"I hope the new school takes kindly to him," said the Canon. "A very difficult lad, I should think. I should say, highly unteachable, and of a temper naturally irreligious."

"His father always thought him rather open to higher influences," said Eleanor. "And I know he has good impulses."

"My dear young lady," said the Canon, rising, and pacing the floor, "you touch upon such a common—such a fatal—error. The only thing that avails is the grace of God, as manifested in and through the sacraments of the Church; and why mere difference in years, as in the case of children, should place them on a different plane from the rest of sinful humanity for whom Christ died, I have never been able to conceive."

"But the baptized child is surely saved, though without active consciousness or effort on his part, is he not?" said Eleanor, who began to see her young friend Lancelot standing in some jeopardy.

"I would not say so—I would not dare to say so," returned the Canon, his black eyebrows rising and falling, as he paced to and fro.

"You talk as if there were no hope. Is there no hope—no remedy?" Eleanor asked.

"It is not given to the priest," said the Canon, "to pronounce upon that mystery. The priest can but point the way. He can but administer the sacraments."

"But of what avail are the sacraments without the changed heart?" asked Eleanor.

"Now, I wonder," thought the Canon, as he made reply, "if she has any one in particular in her mind. The sacraments, my dear young lady, have for their object the bringing to pass of that very change of heart—or, as I prefer to call it, character—of which you speak. Only by change of character shall a man—or a child—or a woman—gain the kingdom of heaven; and only by means of the sacraments may that blessed, all-important re-creation be effected."

"But supposing," Eleanor persisted, the point of her parasol still drawing lines upon the carpet—"supposing the sacraments are waiting upon one side of the wall, and the man—or the child, or the woman—passes by, daily, on the other. Supposing he—or she, or it—a naturally virtuous person, so far," she timidly amended, feeling the Canon's green eyes upon her, "so far as an irreligious person may be called virtuous, passes by the church door and never enters."

"She *has* some particular person in her mind," thought the Canon. "His blood be on his own head," he said easily, with a partial return to that former impersonation.

Eleanor flushed an even pink. "What ought one to do?" she said.

"I don't quite understand your difficulty," said Mr. Glossop smoothly. "What ought . . . ?"

"I mean," said Eleanor confusedly, "what should be the Christian's personal attitude to——"

"To Mr. Richard Thornhaigh?" The Canon completed the sentence in his mind. "To the wilful unbeliever?" was what he said. "To the wilful unbeliever, the Christian attitude is one of pity, of course; and, emphatically, also of course, an attitude of consistent aloofness," said the Canon, with great firmness.

"But one can't help meeting such people. One does n't live in a desert," Eleanor objected. She stopped tracing lines on the carpet, and looked squarely at the Canon, somewhat to his surprise. He had expected her to avoid his glance at this point.

"True," said he. "But we are told to be in the world, but not of it. How shall the Christian," said the Canon experimentally—"how shall he (or she)"—the child, as an example, seemed to have dropped out of the conversation by this time—"be unequally yoked with an unbeliever?"

Eleanor glanced at the clock. The hands pointed to ten minutes to one. At one o'clock Mr. Thornhaigh was accustomed to leave his office and return to Saint Catherine's Gate to lunch.

"I don't care," she thought, "Mr. Glossop has no right to dictate to me like that;" and she proceeded to take her leave of the Canon.

As Uncle Dick emerged from his office, a bunch of roses in his hand, he caught sight of Miss Warrilow, walking homeward on the other side of the road.

"Would you care for these?" said Uncle Dick, presenting his roses.

"They were picked very early this morning—with the dew still upon them."

Eleanor, as she set them in her belt, felt that she had a little misjudged Mr. Thornhaigh. There was evidently a vein of poetry deep-seated in his practical nature which might yet be worked to spiritual profit.

"Do you remember," Mr. Thornhaigh went on, "how you promised to come to Conyers Royal? You 've never come, you know. Let 's make up a party, and go."

The day before, even the hour before, Miss Warrilow would have fobbed him off with feminine excuses. Now, she assented easily to the proposition.

So upon a Saturday, Mr. Thornhaigh, Miss Warrilow, and her mamma, the Reverend Charles with a few of his numerous lady friends, all drove to the ruined Abbey and fair demesne of Conyers Royal; and Lancelot, had from school, and his friend Dolly Glossop, were of the party.

The shadows of evening lay broad upon the shaven lawns of Conyers Royal when Uncle Dick and Miss Warrilow paced to and fro beneath the great tower of the ruined Abbey. High above them, the stone figure leaned over the parapet, as though listening to their talk. The place and time brought emotional recollections of poetry to Eleanor's mind; certain disjointed lines came to her mind; and she felt inclined to repeat them to Uncle Dick. But, glancing aside at Mr. Thornhaigh, Eleanor put away that inclination. Uncle Dick, with his hat on the back of his head, serenely smoking, serenely reminiscent of his lunch, serenely conscious of a general peace and contentment, presented an appearance hopelessly incongruous with Miss Warrilow's sentimental impulses. Her thoughts turned into a different channel. The recollection of Mr. Glossop's sinister denunciations rankled in her mind.

"Have you never thought, Mr. Thornhaigh," began Eleanor, "of the true and beautiful idea which underlies the conventual system?"

"I have n't a doubt they were—and are—very good men and women," said Uncle Dick, beginning to feel that, were it not for the combined influences of a strong lunch, a good cigar, and a summer evening, the conversation would have bored him.

"Nothing more than that?" said Eleanor. She said it so earnestly that Uncle Dick looked at her.

"My dear Miss Warrilow," said he, "I don't want to be flippant; but, really, I 've never given the matter a thought. It hardly concerns me, you see."

"And yet," said Eleanor, looking away into the rosy sunset, "it should concern you."

"But why?"

"The great principle of Sacrifice concerns us all, surely."

"That's what the parsons say, is n't it?" said Uncle Dick, with some appearance of awakening interest.

"Certainly it is part of their duty to expound that doctrine," said Eleanor.

"Well, you see, parsons are not much in my way," said Uncle Dick. "I run across them sometimes in the way of business; and I generally find, on those occasions, that it is always the other party who is to do all the sacrificing—never the parson."

"Mr. Thornhaigh," said Eleanor, with the same earnestness, "believe me, you are prejudiced."

"I am," Uncle Dick agreed, with great cheerfulness.

"To these men whom you, judging perhaps from one or two isolated examples—to them, we are told, are committed the oracles of God."

"We are told? By whom?"

"By the Church, the great Mother," Eleanor replied glibly.

"Exactly," said Uncle Dick. "In other words, by the black-coated gentlemen themselves."

A pause, not devoid of some slight embarrassment. Uncle Dick took his cigar from his mouth, surveyed it critically, and put it back again.

"Are you never serious, Mr. Thornhaigh?"

"I am at this moment; and I tell you, I've seen these same parsons doing more harm than I can tell you. I've seen more than one woman's life spoiled by the family clergyman—health ruined, peace of mind upset, friends estranged, and all the rest of it—all with the best intentions on the part of our clerical friend. And so," said Uncle Dick, coming rather suddenly to a conclusion, "when you talk to me of parsons, Miss Warrilow, I'm sorry, but—much as I should like to—I can't agree with you."

"Neither can I agree with you, Mr. Thornhaigh," said Eleanor. "How can I? I don't doubt that you speak in all sincerity, but that makes it all the worse. . . . I think we had better drop the discussion."

The sun had gone down behind a curtain of gray, the light had faded, and a little wind went past with a chill sigh. Uncle Dick felt, vaguely, that he had somehow behaved in a brutal manner.

"Oh, who's that?" cried Miss Warrilow, looking upwards, as some small missile struck the crown of Uncle Dick's straw hat, and perceiving, for the first time, the dark figure leaning over the parapet.

"That's a monk—a clergyman who chucked himself off the tower, sooner than be a clergyman any longer," said Uncle Dick, also gazing upwards. "But dead monks don't throw stones. I'll go and see who's up there," he added.

"I like her very well," said Uncle Dick to himself, as he climbed the winding stair, "if it was n't for this pious craze. She's a good sort,

and it may wear off. If it does——" Uncle Dick began to speculate, not for the first time, as to how he would appear in the character of suitor.

As Uncle Dick's head appeared upon a level with the leads, his hat was crushed over his eyes, and Lancelot tried to slip past his uncle and down the stair. But he was seized and pinioned.

"What shall I do with him, Dolly?" asked Uncle Dick, of Miss Glossop.

"Hold him over the edge by his heels, if you 're strong enough, and see if he cries out," responded that young lady promptly.

For a dizzy moment, Lance, swinging head downwards in space, saw the grass and bits of sculptured ruin, far below, beckoning to him. Eleanor Warrilow turned a white face skywards, and shrieked aloud; and Uncle Dick as he handed his nephew over the parapet glanced aside at Dolly Glossop. Leaning against the stonework, the color of her pink cheeks not a whit heightened, her round gray eyes quite serene, Dolly was placidly entertained.

"Good boy," said Dolly. "Good dog, then, not to howl when he 's held up in the air."

"Well, there 's no parsonic rot about *that* young lady," was Mr. Thornhaigh's inward reflection, as his nephew swiftly kicked his uncle's shins and as swiftly escaped.

CHAPTER VII

Lancelot had much to do when he came home from Saturday to Monday. On Sunday morning, before service, he walked round about the Cathedral, picking out his old acquaintances, the grotesque little beings carved on gargoyle and finial, and noting Mr. Inkpen's last restoration. Then he went inside; and, finding Mr. Pottel with both his hands employed in pulling the small ropes which worked the hammers striking upon the bells, pilfered the keys from the Verger's coat-pocket, and went into the crypt. The acrid, earthy odor took him by the nose, and carried him straight back to the days of his childish explorations; which seemed so incredibly childish and so far away that Lance turned from the remembrance. Upon the traditional site of an ancient well, was an excavation; and Lance, coming upon Mr. Inkpen after service, respectfully inquired of him as to its object. The old man eyed him with a wry face.

"You 've a wonderful thirst for information, my boy," said he sourly. "I remember that very well. Now, why do you want to know?"

"I am really interested, sir," said Lance.

"Another gunpowder plot?" asked Mr. Inkpen, who had never forgiven Lance for his blasting operations.

"No, sir. That was a long time ago, sir," said Lance, with an engaging smile.

"Why, then," said the architect, mollifying, "I'll tell you some more. The Dean thinks—and so do I, as I've been saying for years, only no one heeded—that the whole subterranean structure of the Cathedral should be surveyed—so far as our limited means will allow—if it were merely for structural reasons. But, quite as important," said Mr. Inkpen, shutting his eyes and speaking as though he were just going to burst into tears, "even more important, is the question of symbolism. Now, as you doubtless know, after your exhaustive studies in the Cathedral, Master Lancelot, the symbolical scheme of the structure is at present sadly incomplete."

Lancelot could extract no more than that from the old gentleman; and he went home to that cold roast beef and those pickles which are a British institution as impregnably established as the Church itself. Followed, the inevitable drowsy consequences; the Reverend Charles, who was understood to be in a state requiring delicate consideration, owing to the exhausting nature of his spiritual labors, retired to his study; and Lancelot went to smoke with Uncle Dick in the conservatory. Uncle Dick allowed his nephew one cigarette on these occasions.

Presently, the somnolent quietude of the summer afternoon was broken by the ringing of the front-door bell; an event, occurring at that sacred time, so extraordinary, that every one in the house woke up with a start. A servant announcing a gentleman to see Mr. Thornhaigh, there entered to Uncle Dick and his nephew a brisk gentleman with very red cheeks, very black eyes, very black whiskers, and a general glistening air of alert, aggressive good humor.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," said the stranger, in a high, conciliatory voice, bowing with great politeness. "I am a stranger to you (though I know your name well, Mr. Thornhaigh) and I must apologize for this intrusion. Permit me to present to you my card. Beautiful weather for the time of year, is it not?" said the stranger, conversationally aside to Lancelot, while Uncle Dick perused the legend, ornate with many flourishes, "Mr. Samuel Penfold. The Pelagic Fur Company, Limited."

"I felt I could not do less than come and offer you my personal and grateful thanks—though without introduction, and at the risk of being thought intrusive—for your kindness to my wife (Mrs. Penfold) the other day, sir," continued Mr. Penfold, fixing his sparkling gaze upon Uncle Dick. "And Sunday being my only day, and only two Sundays a month at home (which is short allowance, you'll agree, I'm sure, gentlemen, for a man fond of the domestic hearth), and my wife (Mrs. Penfold) saying, 'Sam, I'm sure Mr. Thornhaigh will pardon the intrusion,' and I being highly desirous of coming to, as I say, offer

you my personal and grateful thanks, sir, for your kindness to Mrs. Penfold (my wife) the other day, why," said Mr. Penfold, with a cheerful laugh, "I came, sir."

"Very glad to see you," said Uncle Dick, who had been inwardly comparing the picture his fancy had constructed of Mr. Penfold, out of Mrs. Penfold's few words about her husband, with the very different reality. "Sit down, Mr. Penfold. (Don't go, Lance.) Have a cigar. And how is Mrs. Penfold?"

"You 're extremely good, sir, and very excellent these cigars are, I feel sure. Mrs. Penfold, sir, thank you, is fairly well, at the present time. She suffers a good deal from her spirits, as a rule, and that 's our sad trouble." Mr. Penfold's mobile voice took on a sympathetic and lamenting tone. "My wife (Mrs. Penfold), sir, does n't move," said Mr. Penfold confidentially, "on what you might call an even plane. Her fits of depression are dreadful at times; and nothing seems to comfort her but continual going to church at the Cathedral—and even that, as you may say, don't always act as it should. And when you were so kind to Mrs. Penfold the other day, Mr. Thornhaigh, my wife was in one of her bad times. And it 's lonely for her, you see, we not having any family, and me being forced to be away so much. Like being married to a sailor, my wife says. But without the danger, as I always tell her."

"I should think a little cheerful society might be beneficial," observed Uncle Dick.

"And so it would, Mr. Thornhaigh, without a doubt," cried Mr. Penfold. "But that 's where it is. You know what the society of Northborough is, Mr. Thornhaigh, as well as I do, and what an exclusive set they are. Now, my wife (Mrs. Penfold) comes of a good stock, sir (her father was a clergyman); so she 's a cut above the ordinary tradesman's wife. She can't help that, can she? And because she married, as you may say, into business, the ladies won't call upon her, Mr. Thornhaigh. We don't complain, though I could wish matters were otherwise, for my wife's sake, you understand me, sir. And what I say is, I believe in a gentility of nature that 's above the social conventions, Mr. Thornhaigh, and there 's the whole matter in a nutshell."

Mr. Penfold, with immense care, deposited the ash of his cigar in a flower-pot, and got up to go.

"I thank you again for your kindness, sir, very heartily, I 'm sure," said Mr. Penfold, warmly shaking hands with Uncle Dick. "And if you 'd allow me to be of any little use to you in the way of business, such as obtaining furs, or rugs, or woollens generally, and the like of that, at cost price (and that makes a difference, it does indeed), I shall be only too proud and pleased, sir, at any time, to do so."

"'Whatever, Lord, I lend to Thee, repaid a thousandfold will be.'

That 's a deal of gratitude for a very little piece of cake, ain't it?" said Uncle Dick, when Mr. Penfold had bowed his rosy, glistening self out of the front door. "And I had a bunch of roses from the lady, too."

"Who is this funny chap with the champagne sparkle all over him?" asked Lance.

"Mr. Samuel Penfold, known to his employers as Our Mr. Penfold. He 's a commercial gentleman, commercial traveller, or bagman," returned his uncle. "His wife, Mrs. Penfold—as he calls her—seems a foolish sort of body," continued Uncle Dick, after a pause. "But I don't see why some of these idle ladies should n't look after her. Why should n't Miss Warrilow go and see her, for instance?"

"Eleanor," said Lance, "is not idle. I don't see why she should be bothered with your Mrs. Penfolds."

"I withdraw the expression," said Uncle Dick, "on condition you persuade her to go. Mrs. Penfold, 97 East Watergate Street. Don't forget, Tyke. I expect you 're going over the road to tea. Tell her what Mr. Penfold said about his wife, Mrs. Penfold; and you can say that your Uncle Richard, who is a man of feeling, thinks it would be a great kindness to go and see her."

Since Miss Warrilow (at whose shrine Lance continued to offer mild devotional sacrifices) would be attending afternoon service, Lance went to pay a duty call upon Miss Starling. That good lady welcomed him with effusion.

"And how is your good father, after his strenuous labors?" inquired Miss Starling. "I do hope he is not overworking himself."

Lance replied that his father was really resting; and, in response to Miss Starling's inquiry as to the means of relaxation employed, he specified Indian cigars and a novel.

"And your Uncle Richard? What a clever man of business your Uncle Richard is, indeed, is he not? It is entirely due to his cleverness and kindness—though I must n't say how"—Miss Starling becomes archly mysterious at this point—"that I have been enabled to build a new class-room, or rather—to be precise—to begin building it. Would you like to see the beginnings? As I may really lay claim to you as an old pupil," says the engaging lady, "I am sure you will be interested."

Lance replied that his Uncle Richard was very well; and, with a show of interest that was not all pretence, he inspected the new brick walls, the crusted heaps of mortar, solidifying in the sun, the trenches and general dismal chaos.

"Has your Uncle Richard happened to say anything lately as to the commercial prosperity of the Westralian Trust and Investment Company?" continued Miss Starling, as she led her visitor into the house to tea. "For, after all," she went on, with a great appearance of friendly candor, "why should I conceal the fact from an old friend

such as yourself, Lancelot, that it is in your good uncle's Company that my modest savings have increased? And I am naturally interested in its prosperity."

"I believe the shares are standing at a heavy premium," said Lance, who had overheard the statement without comprehending its meaning.

"How pleasant that is, is it not?" cried Miss Starling. "We are taught (are we not?) that money is not everything in this life, and of course that is profoundly true. And yet, properly used, what a means of usefulness it is, Lancelot! As I always say, your good uncle is the Benefactor of Northborough Cross. He is so popular, is he not?"

"Oh, yes, every one likes Uncle Dick," Lance politely agreed.

"I should n't wonder if your Uncle Richard would soon begin to think of settling in life," Miss Starling suggested.

"Is n't he settled? He seems pretty comfortable," returned Lance obtusely, with his eye on the muffins.

"When one has been a great traveller, as your uncle has, one never knows what tie would suffice to keep one at home. Mere business would scarcely—do you think so?" Miss Starling insinuated.

"No, business is all rot, of course—I mean, it is n't a bit interesting," Lancelot agreed; and Miss Starling tried a new tack.

"Have you seen your friend Miss Eleanor Warrilow to-day? I am so fond of dear Eleanor. Do you know, I admire her self-denying and useful life so much? My only fear is, lest she should overtax her strength," said Miss Starling. "She works so hard among the poor, under Canon Glossop's direction."

"Canon Glossop," said Lance, roused at the name, "is enough to make any one overtax their strength."

"A most influential man," said Miss Starling gently. "And Miss Warrilow is such a wonderful help to him, is she not?"

"She 's always going to him, any way," said Lance sulkily.

"Some more tea, dear boy?" said Miss Starling. "And does she never permit herself any recreation or amusement? Those delightful parties, for instance, which your Uncle Richard——?"

"She 'll hardly ever come," said Lance. "I think visiting the poor is a mistake," he added. "It does n't do them any good, and it does you harm. The poor are all right, if you leave 'em alone."

Miss Starling smiled with indulgent sweetness.

"Have you seen Dolly Glossop, your old schoolmate?" she inquired.

"Not to-day," said Lance. "I hate to go to the house, you know."

"Poor Dolly! Her mother is, I fear, growing steadily worse," said Miss Starling, with a sigh.

"She 'd better die soon, and be done with it," said Lance, with the nonchalance of youth.

"My dear boy, why do you say such shocking things?"

"Well, the Canon hates her, doesn't he?" said Lance. "And I should think she hated him."

"Come, come, I really can't listen to you any more, you naughty boy, if you talk in such a dreadful way, I can't indeed!" Miss Starling assumes a mock indignation; and Lance goes away a little swollen with importance, and with a strong impression upon him that he has rather shone in conversation as a shrewd, bold man of the world.

Lance went back to school; and thereafter, about the quiet study overlooking the green garden and the river, where the Reverend Charles grew more and more to hug his hours of solitary ease; about that other clerical retreat, where the Reverend Canon Glossop, behind a locked door, fell into shuddering deeps of horror, and rose again to purple heights of inspiration; and where he received his penitents, and diagnosed their several cases, and administered such spiritual drugs as he thought fit; and about the gray house in the walled garden, where dear, good Mrs. Warrilow drowsed contentedly among her cushions, and where, in a chamber of ascetic furnishing, candles burned at the feet of a crucifix, late into the night, lighting Eleanor Warrilow to certain spiritual conflicts with the powers of darkness, and wrestlings with some unseen, phantasmal power which she believed to be divine, there rose and buzzed a whispering of many tongues, all wagging in idle gossip.

One virtuous matron had been told by another virtuous matron that the Reverend Charles Crane read novels of a Sunday; that he smoked on that sacred day; a third unimpeachable authority gave it to be understood that the Reverend Charles was lax in certain directions not to be definitely specified; a fourth opined that the Bishop, or, at least, the Dean, should take order with the backslider. A committee of virtuous matrons, dressed for the most part in rusty black, with elastic-sided boots, and all of Low Church views, decided that Canon Vyvyan Glossop was a most dangerous man, whose pernicious views and Roman proclivities were eating like an ulcer into the heart of society; and in at least one instance—there must be no names mentioned, but of course there is no objection to my mentioning it, in the strictest confidence, to *you*, my dear—in at least one instance, the most deplorable consequences were becoming notorious. How her mother can be so blind, we cannot think. And poor Mrs. Glossop—really, we can find it in our hearts to pity poor Mrs. Glossop. Some one ought to tell the Dean; but the Dean, poor man, is so immersed in his archeology, that he has no time to see what is going on under his very nose. To such purpose, and much more in like manner, did a whisper and rumor rise in Northborough Cross, and beat unheard about the homes of its unsuspecting victims.

CHAPTER VIII

Miss Eleanor Warrilow, sitting in Mrs. Penfold's little front parlor, was distressfully conscious that its atmosphere reminded her of certain houses in the Zoölogical Gardens. For, by privilege of his position in the Pelagic Fur Company, Limited, Our Mr. Penfold was enabled to carpet his house from top to bottom with the skins of beasts; a luxurious system which was not without an olfactory disadvantage.

Mrs. Penfold, sitting in front of the spiritless flickering in the grate, with her hands folded in her lap, seemed like one who had been imprisoned in that cheerless room until prison and prisoner had grown together into the same depressing aspect. This had been the burden of Miss Warrilow's reflections when she came to see Mrs. Penfold for the first time; it was their burden still, upon this her fifth or sixth visit.

"I often wonder to myself, sitting here—for I pass a good part of my time alone, Miss Warrilow, Mr. Penfold being so much away—what it would feel like to be dying," said Mrs. Penfold pensively.

"I suppose we all do sometimes," said Eleanor, with a dutiful show of cheerfulness. "But death, after all, is only the parting of the veil, is it not? And we don't mind the length and discomforts of the railway journey, when home lies at the end of it." Miss Warrilow quoted this sentence from a sermon, which (as she expressed it) had been greatly blessed to her.

"There was a time when I would have said the same thing," said Mrs. Penfold wearily. "Now, I don't believe in any of it any more. I am just like"—she looked left and right into the gloom—"like a person left in a great dark room, all in disorder, and not knowing what to do next, or which way to turn."

Miss Warrilow, rather at a loss, fell back upon another quotation.

"Well, well," said Mrs. Penfold, "all I can say is, there 's no light for me. It shone once, it 's true. Now the smoking flax is quenched. When you go down upon your knees to-night, Miss Warrilow, you may render grateful thanks that the light still burns within you, to lighten your darkness."

"The light you speak of is never really withdrawn, though it may seem otherwise for a season," said Eleanor, still speaking by the book.

"I 've heard that too," said the sad lady. "It may be true, or it may not. It is n't true for me. The last state of that man is worse than the first. That 's a true text, at any rate. And cursed," said Mrs. Penfold, rising into animation, "is he that removeth his neighbor's landmark—and doubly cursed, I say, if he put it there first," she added, with some appearance of obscurity.

Miss Warrilow began to grow curious.

"I wish I could help you. I should like to so much," she said.

"I know you would, and you do, my dear (if you 'll pardon the liberty), with your kindness. And yet I 'm past help—past praying for, as you may say—and what I earnestly hope is, you may never come to say the same."

Eleanor's face, by the light of the fire, was eloquent of sympathy.

"I would n't say a word," Mrs. Penfold resumed, after a pause, "to trouble you with my distress—for, after all, what does it matter?—but for that same fear, the fear of you coming to the same state. A failure I am, there 's no doubt, a hopeless failure; but I can stand for a warning, I should hope to goodness, like Lot's wife, that they turned into a pillar of salt, poor woman. And if tears were any good, I should be a pillar of salt, too, by this time," said Mrs. Penfold, "for I 'm sure I 've cried my eyes out, time and again."

"Anything you would like to tell me, I should be only too glad to hear, dear Mrs. Penfold."

"You 've found grace, I know," said Mrs. Penfold. "Three years ago I found grace, too. I was seeking for years, for the wicket gate is cruel hard to find sometimes, considering, as I 've often thought. Then, one Sunday morning, I seemed to come at it all in a minute. Something Canon Glossop said in his sermon in the Cathedral opened my eyes, and there was the gate of salvation, the shining gate, standing wide open for me to step in, only I had n't seen it before. I was so glad and thankful that I could n't but speak to the Canon about it afterwards. He 'd said in his sermon, you know, that he would be so very glad to help any one who liked to come to him. Oh, he 's a wicked, cruel devil, is Canon Vyvyan Glossop!" cried Mrs. Penfold, with a startling leap from listlessness to an extraordinary display of anger.

"*What* did you say?" said the amazed Eleanor.

"I say," Mrs. Penfold resumed, with deliberate emphasis, "that Canon Glossop is a wicked, cruel devil. Now, listen, my dear. I 've gone so far, I 'll go further, and you shall judge for yourself. He talked to me in the kindest manner. He made me happy as I never was before (and never will be again) and asked me to come and see him at his house whenever I was troubled by spiritual difficulties. I was troubled a deal in those days, me being so much alone, and I used to put it down to the assaults of Satan, but I 've sometimes thought since it might be poor living and not enough butcher's meat. For when her husband 's not at home a woman often does n't feed herself as she should," said Mrs. Penfold, in parenthesis. "But however that might be, troubles and wrestlings of spirit I did have, and the Canon helped me wonderfully, for he 's a clever, clever man. Often and often he 'd be praying with me in his study till I 've really thought the Spirit of God must be shining in the room with a visible light. All the time I never saw Mrs. Glossop, and never so much as knew he was married. Mr. Glossop

was my father in the Lord, leading me up the straight and narrow path—and I truly believed it. And he used to talk so much about my being unequally yoked with an unbeliever—for although Mr. Penfold is a professing Christian, I could n't honestly say it ever went deeper with him—that I used to try and influence Samuel for good, and it was only Samuel's sweet temper and good heart which kept us from quarreling, as I see now I look back. And there was nothing I did n't tell Mr. Glossop. He persuaded me to confess to him regularly. I could cut my tongue out as I think of it." Mrs. Penfold stopped suddenly, and Eleanor sat staring at her in silence. As Mrs. Penfold went on, Eleanor knew, as certainly as though she had been told, that she had made an omission in the narrative.

"So things went on, until there came a change. I was ill, and though the Canon came to see me once, he never came again, though I wrote to him to ask him. I met him in the street when I was about again, and he passed me by like a dog. Thinking I had offended in some way without knowing it, I went to his house, and never shall I forget it. He sat in his chair, balancing an ivory paper-knife between the tips of his fingers. 'What can I do for you?' he said—just as though I had been a common woman come to beg from the poor-box. 'I don't want to hurry you in any way,' he said, 'but I am so often obliged to explain that my time is not my own, to dispose of indiscriminately to all comers.' And then, seeing, I suppose, how hurt in my feelings I was, he took another tone, and for the time I really thought he was his old self again. And thinking it over again when I got home, I made out—like a weak fool—that the fault was on my side, and I made up my mind to go again and put matters straight. I could n't bear, you see, to think any different. I took a few flowers with me—and the servant at the door denied me. Everything seemed to turn topsy-turvy; and, what with the heat of the day, I don't know how I should have got home if it had n't been for Mr. Thornhaigh's kindness in helping me." By this time Mrs. Penfold's impulse of energy had expended itself, and she relapsed into silence. "I gave Mr. Thornhaigh the flowers," she added inconsequently.

Mrs. Penfold's rather shadowy story discomposed Miss Warrilow, without concerning her. But, as Eleanor continued to question the injured lady, a clearer view of Mrs. Penfold's late experiences began to dawn upon her friend.

An emotional, good-hearted, foolish, and weak woman: turning for support and the sentimental gratification of a religious impulse to a clergyman whose personality attracted her; who received the penitent with a welcome something more than sacerdotal; who, having received her confidence, such as it was, and won her admiring affection, such as it was, forthwith lost all interest, human or professional, in his dependent;

and who, at that point, sent her away: this was the image in the mirror upon which Eleanor was forced to look. And in that mirror she could not but perceive her own reflection, side by side with the lachrymose presentment of the commercial traveller's foolish wife. With that picture hanging in her mind, Miss Warrilow walked homewards through the dim streets. Whenever Miss Warrilow recalled that time in her life, she saw again the line of lamps, their yellow reflections gleaming in the wet pavement, swept bare of passengers, the pallid face of the moon, hanging high above the double line of sombre houses, unveiled and staring upon her, and veiled again by the travelling clouds. For, hitherto, Miss Warrilow had reposed her innocent trust in the Reverend Vyvyan Glossop, stopping her ears against the instinct which warned her against a lean, black-bearded, green-eyed man with a hanging under-lip. She ardently desired to believe, and did believe, that the clergyman whose outward aspect so belied him, was leading her, with a strong and wise guidance, upon the steep way which led to the Eternal City, the bourne of all Christian wayfarers upon earth. Painfully agitated, her thoughts revolving in a timorous confusion, Eleanor came beneath the shadow of the Cathedral, and turned down the hill to the right hand, beneath the old wall of the city, and heard the voice of the river rising upon the night, and came into her chamber. She lit the candles, and the black and white crucifix hanging on the wall sprang into prominence. But it was not to the ghostly emblem of her faith that she turned. Across the mingled disarray of her thoughts, the memory of Mrs. Penfold's conclusion to her dismal story grew suddenly distinct. Eleanor opened a drawer, where, among other fading relics of sentimental occasions, was a bunch of withered roses. Miss Warrilow had examined Mrs. Penfold as to the day upon which the Canon had turned her from his doors, comparing dates in her own mind. She remembered Mr. Thornhaigh's words when, upon the same day, he had given her the roses, and how she had given him credit for a new delicacy of sentiment. "They were picked very early this morning, with the dew still upon them," said Uncle Dick. Now it appeared that Mrs. Penfold had gathered that posy, and that—— Miss Warrilow pursued the reflection no further. She flung the dead blossoms into the grate; whence the housemaid transferred them, next morning, to the dust-bin.

CHAPTER IX

The Reverend Vyvyan Glossop, pacing uneasily to and fro in his study, was conscious of a vague apprehension that the hand of the Lord had been turning against him of late. His wife's malady was increasing upon her; and, although Mr. Glossop avoided the invalid's society, the knowledge of her illness and unhappy, secluded existence, caused him a

certain discomfort. His daughter Dorothy was developing a highly unfilial habit of tacit rebellion, directed against the parental scheme of life generally; and this irritated him intensely. And, more than these, the continued abstention of Miss Eleanor Warrilow from spiritual communion with her father in the Church caused Mr. Glossop some painful searchings of heart. His conscience, with the rest of the clerical system, was heavily drugged; and so long as the daily current of circumstance ran smoothly, that inward monitor slumbered and slept; but so soon as misfortune seemed to threaten, it would wake to some confused and angry mutterings of reproach, which would too often induce that condition of mind and body most susceptible to attacks of neurotic diathesis. So the Canon lived a double life. Not that he was a hypocrite. The hypocrite is a bird of a rarer breed than Mr. Glossop belonged to. He told no one of his secret vice—why should he—and, save for that tacit suppression, he made no deliberate pretence to be other than he was. Canon Glossop, rising upon the wings of a subtle drug to airy pinnacles of pulpit eloquence; Canon Glossop, receiving female penitence with opposing motives as inextricably intermingled as flesh and spirit are; Canon Glossop, neglecting his wife, and formulating rigid systems of discipline for his daughter, which he never succeeded in enforcing; Canon Glossop, making the most fervent prayers, alone in his chamber; and Canon Glossop, a prey to inevitable reaction, cowering and shaking before a nameless terror: were all of a piece. And, like all who practise that fascinating pastime of the double life, the Canon was haunted by an impression that people began to look askance at him.

To Canon Glossop, pacing to and fro in his study, perceiving and dreading the approach of neurotic diathesis while the fiend was yet afar off, there entered a servant with a message from Mrs. Glossop, desiring to see her husband. Mrs. Glossop never intruded upon his solitude; and the Canon, surprised at this unwonted request, went downstairs to the cheerless room where his wife wore out her weary days, and nights more weary still.

In that quiet chamber, the whispering of the fire, and the tiny click of the knitting-needles moving in Mrs. Glossop's black-mittened hands, were clearly audible. The invalid lay upon a couch drawn to the side of the hearth, a black shawl wrapped about her shoulders. The white knitting she was holding flowed upon a garish many-colored worsted rug, which covered her to the feet.

"I hope I am not disturbing you, Vyvyan," said Mrs. Glossop, in her peculiar, monotoned voice, that seemed attuned to the sombre room. "If I am not, I should like to speak to you."

"Surely," said the Canon. He looked at the needles, moving, like long antennæ, in her twisted hands, at the fire, at the parti-colored

coverlet, whose green and yellow gave him a disagreeable sensation—anywhere but at the square countenance which confronted him.

"I want to speak to you, first of all, about Dorothy," the even voice went on. "I have been talking to her, Vyvyan; and I want you to promise me that, if she has any definite wish as to her future life, when I am gone, you will let her do as she desires."

"When you are gone? What do you mean, Lucy?"

"I shall not be with you very much longer, Vyvyan," said Mrs. Glossop steadily. "There is no use in blinking the inevitable."

"When you talk in such a strain as—as this," said the Canon, his under-lip trembling as he perused the carpet, "I must really request you, Lucy, to be more explicit. I must ask you to make sure, before we pursue the subject, that you are not giving way to nervous fancies. Has the medical man, for instance, said anything which leads you to suppose——" His voice trailed into silence, and he glanced furtively at his wife. She was regarding him with an expression of peculiar misery.

"I am telling you what I believe to be the truth. Don't force me to say it again, Vyvyan. Do but give me your word to let little Dorothy have her chance in life. Will you?"

Confused and perturbed, the Canon began to pace to and fro.

"When——" he began, and stopped. "If anything," he began again—"if, as the phrase is, anything should—happen, can you not trust me to do the best for our child?"

The knitting-needles clicked, and the fire muttered to itself in the silence.

"Vyvyan, I don't often ask you for anything. I have been a burden to you for years, though I have tried to leave you free as I could. Now I ask you to do this for me, from the bottom of my heart."

"Such a pledge," said the Canon, staring out of the window with his back to his wife, "willing as I am to give it, cannot but argue a want of confidence between husband and wife, which I am loath to recognize. You cannot imagine that I do not love my daughter?"

"And loving her," answered the monotonous voice, "try to put yourself in my place, Vyvyan, and think of yourself as leaving her, beyond all sight or sound, for all her life."

The knitting-needles were stilled, and the fire took up the conversation. Canon Glossop, gazing out of the window, could not see the look with which his wife was regarding him. The ghost of an old love, long since withering, to perish of neglect, looked from out the sunken eyes in the sallow countenance.

"I have not lived a very happy life. I should like to die in peace," the sad voice went on; and the Canon, turning about, met his wife's glance, and was moved to some pity.

"I promise, Lucy, if it will make you any easier," said he. "Not

that I admit your position—for I feel sure you are merely under the influence of a morbid fit that will pass away."

"Vyvyan, you have lifted a great load from my heart." She stretched a poor, gnarled hand towards her husband, and Mr. Glossop, after a moment's hesitation, drew near to her. It was long since they two had exchanged the common coin of endearment; and the Canon, touched with some nameless emotion, which was not pity or regret, and which yet owned both these qualities, was conscious also of an uncomfortable embarrassment.

"When one lies awake at night a good deal," went on Mrs. Glossop, holding fast to her husband's dry, hot fingers, and looking up into the black-bearded countenance with the shifty green eyes and the tremulous mouth, "hour after hour, counting the Cathedral chimes, this earthly life sometimes seems to lie very far away, and the other life comes near, so near that I often think if a corner of the veil were lifted, I should see into the great mystery which is hid with God. And at such times I see the future, clear and sad like a picture, of life stretching in a desert way for a long, long distance when I am taken, and my child wandering, alone. I see all the dangers and the trouble which beset her path; and so that I might be with her to help her, I think I would endure any suffering. But God orders otherwise, and one must try and have faith."

The Canon, who was in no condition to withstand a sudden stress of emotion, knelt down, buried his face in the green and yellow wool of the coverlet, and wept miserably. His wife began to comfort him with tender words; and, in his tears, Mr. Glossop wondered how much knowledge she had of the tangled threads which went to make the spotted web of his life. She had never reproached him by so much as a word; it might be that she believed wholly in his goodness; and he made, in that hour, some tentative, conditional resolutions of amendment. But even as they formed themselves in his mind, he knew that, as the Reverend Vyvyan Glossop had lived in the past, so he was condemned to live in the future.

For the next ten days or so, Mr. Glossop showed his wife more kindness and more attention than he had done in the past ten years. Then, finding that, to all appearances, she grew no worse, but rather better, the Canon's fears, and with them his new-found devotion, began to subside; and it presently occurred to him that the strain which he had lately undergone put him under the necessity of taking a little holiday. So he went away for a week leaving Dorothy and her mother together. Three or four days after the Canon's departure, Mrs. Glossop held a long talk with Dorothy. After a bitter struggle, she had decided to sacrifice her husband to her child.

She told Dorothy that she believed she must shortly die; and then

she told her, in plain words, of her father's manner of life. Nothing that her husband did was hidden from this silent lady, who sat alone in her dark room; and when she had finished talking, Dorothy had passed, at one step, from the ignorance of childhood to the plain, ugly knowledge which transforms childhood into age, by a swifter operation than the natural process of time.

"I believe your father to be essentially a good man," said Mrs. Glossop, "in spite of everything. He has this fatal weakness in one point—and so have many great and good men. And now for the rest, it is not for you or me to judge him. When you are older, you will understand better; and the more one understands, the more one forgives. It is an old saying, that if one was able perfectly to understand all, there would be no such thing as condemnation. And, remember, he is always your father. He has promised me that you shall choose your own life."

Upon the morning of the second day after this memorable conversation, Dolly awoke to a sense of grisly disaster and hushed confusion in the house. Her mother was released at last.

CHAPTER X

Time, in its revolutions, carried Lancelot through his school career to the end, and brought him home again to his father's house. At seventeen, Lancelot had acquired a respectable proficiency in games, an athletic habit of body, and a superficial acquaintance with the ancient languages of Greece and Rome. Eight years' schooling had turned him into an active and cheerful youth, with a strong liking for the open air, with polite manners, and an invincible paralysis of speech when he was snared into the society of ladies. As for knowing anything at all of the world in which he lived, or being able to write an ordinary letter in lucid English, or owning any intelligent acquaintance with the literature of his native country whatsoever, had he spent his eight years alone upon a desert island, Lance could scarce have known less upon these subjects.

To Lance's surprise, Dolly Glossop opened the door to him. Dolly's hair was gathered in coils upon her head, the hem of Dolly's black dress swept the ground; and Lancelot, who had forgotten to expect these symbols of maturity, was seized with a painful embarrassment. But Dolly was quite at ease.

"Hullo, Lance!" she said. "How are you? Don't look so astonished. I'm staying here—did n't you know? You don't look very pleased. I hope we shall get on together," Dolly concluded, with cheerful assurance.

Lance was not at all pleased, at first. The entertainment of a young lady formed no part of his schemes for the summer, which were founded

upon a strictly selfish basis. Upon the day of her mother's death, in the absence of Canon Glossop, the Reverend Charles had taken charge of Dorothy; and when the Canon announced his intention of going away once more, as soon after the funeral as possible, the Reverend Charles had offered to keep his daughter as long as the Canon liked. Mr. Glossop was only too glad to rid himself of responsibility for the time. There was no one else to consult, save Uncle Dick; and Uncle Dick never raised any objection to anything, as long as his personal comfort was not thereby endangered; and so the matter was settled. The Southern Consolidated Investments Company had been steadily productive of wealth; and the Reverend Charles and that benefactor to society, Uncle Dick, were by this time possessed of a comfortable income.

The Reverend Charles, indulgent parent that he was, gave his son a generous allowance of pocket-money, and his liberty during the summer, merely suggesting that Lancelot should endeavor to evolve from his inner consciousness some definite preference which should guide him to the choice of a profession. But Lancelot gave himself small concern as to the future, for the present filled him full. Released from the fetters of school, Lancelot woke every morning to a blessed sense of freedom. For the time being, the whole sunny world was his to enjoy; and he enjoyed it. So he played cricket for his native town, and was happy. Cricket was the chief end of man's being; and cricket, pursued, as it were, upon the beautiful background of the ancient city, set with green gardens and encircled with the shining river, where every one was friendly, and where the haunting sights and sounds and memories of boyhood were renewed and transfigured, made up all that Lancelot knew, or cared to know, of life. Meanwhile, Miss Dorothy Glossop stayed on in the house of the Reverend Charles, from week to week; for her father, the Canon, was always just about to come home, and never came; and the Reverend Charles was always just about to make some definite arrangement with Mr. Glossop, and never made it. And meanwhile it occurred to Miss Starling that a match between her two old pupils, Lancelot and Dorothy, would be a very nice and appropriate consummation; naturally, she confided this reflection to a circle of particular friends; and thus the matter became part of the common talk of Northborough Cross.

"Every one says we 're engaged, Dolly," said Lancelot. "Did you know that?"

"People are such fools in this place, they 'll say anything," Dolly answered, with composure. "What does it matter?"

"It does n't matter in the least, if you don't mind."

"Why should I? I 've got a lot to do before I get engaged to any one."

"So have I, I suppose," said Lancelot vaguely.

Doubtless, Lancelot had contemplated Dolly, for passing months, in the light of future possibilities, as the light in which all young women presented themselves to him at that time of his life. But the tongue of gossip, however idle and irresponsible, seemed to lift the matter from the realm of the purely abstract into the province of practical affairs; and the idea came home to Lance with a prickling sense of novelty.

"But what is it you want to do?" Lancelot asked. "You 're not going to philander in the slums at the heels of a parson, I hope."

"No," said Dolly; "I 'm not going to do that."

"What, then?"

"Well, there are not many things a girl is supposed to be able to do, are there?" said Dolly. "She 's allowed to do other people's dirty work, as much as she likes, and there it seems to stop. She may go out as a governess, of course; when she will be treated with less consideration than the cook, and get less wages."

"Why do anything? There 's no point in working if you 're not obliged to, that I can see," said Lancelot.

"One can't live on one's father," said Dolly.

"I can, as long as he 's got plenty of money. The governor 's getting quite wealthy, too," returned Lancelot.

"Your governor and mine are rather different, you see," Dolly observed. "And even so, you will have to earn a living. What are *you* going to do, for instance?"

"I wonder what I *shall* do," said Lancelot, quite forgetting his companion's affairs as soon as the conversation touched upon his own. "I should like some interesting sort of work which left me time for myself. And I must have peace and quiet," said this lusty youth, with great earnestness, "and air and exercise. I might go into Uncle Dick's office. Or I might take up Art."

"Oh, painting!" remarked Dolly dubiously.

"Painting is n't the only art," said Lancelot, with a superior air. "There 's architecture—and music, and literature, and all that."

"Do you like drawing?" Unconsciously, Dolly's mind worked in the reverse direction; she was interesting herself in Lance's airy schemes, and forgetting her own.

"I like the Cathedral. I don't often say so, but I do," Lancelot admitted. "I like lots of things, in a way, but the Cathedral is what I really take to. I might be able to work at that sort of thing. I 've never really worked yet, but I might perhaps toil at architecture."

"Go into Mr. Inkpen's office as a pupil," said Dolly. "Then you could live at home, and be comfortable."

"Good idea. I never thought of that," said Lancelot. And the next time the Reverend Charles questioned Lancelot as to his ambitions,

Lancelot replied that he had some notion of taking up the study of architecture.

"Is there money in it?" Uncle Dick inquired.

"Competence—fame—money too, perhaps," said the Reverend Charles. "But, after all, money is a secondary consideration. The great thing is, to follow an honorable profession that one really likes."

"Yes, I know," said Uncle Dick. "I know all that. But somebody 's got to make the money, Charles."

"Well, and are n't you occupied in doing so?" returned the little clergyman, undisturbed. "The Consolidated 's all right, is n't it?"

"I suppose so. Gorges sold out and made a lot t' other day," said Uncle Dick, "and I don't see why he should n't be a noble architect, if he wants. I venture to suggest that we should consult the venerable Inkpots. What do you say, Tyke?"

"I should think so, certainly," replied Lancelot.

After more desultory talk and consideration, recurring at intervals for a week or two, Mr. Inkpen was called into consultation with the Reverend Charles and his brother-in-law. The old gentleman expressed the gloomiest view of the case.

"But look here," interrupted Uncle Dick, "can't a man get a decent livelihood out of the job?"

"Of course he can." Mr. Inkpen opened his eyes and stared angrily at Uncle Dick. "Of course he can—if he 's industrious."

"Well, that 's something," said Uncle Dick.

"When I say industrious," Mr. Inkpen, shutting his eyes again, resumed, "perhaps I attach a different meaning to the word to what you do, Mr. Thornhaigh. When I speak of industry, I don't mean office hours ten to one, and go home and enjoy yourself. I mean office hours ten to ten, or eight to eight, and go home and work till you go to bed, aye, every night, and all the year round."

"And what prospects could you hold out, now, to the aspirant in question?" asked the clergyman.

"Dependent upon his own exertions—entirely dependent on his own personal exertions," returned the arcitect. "Influence, of course, can do something—I am far from denying it. He might rise to the top of the tree with influence; or he might, of course, get there without it. There 's always plenty of room at the top of the tree."

During a short silence, the Reverend Charles looked at Uncle Dick with inquiring eyebrows, and Uncle Dick nodded.

"The fact is, Mr. Inkpen," said the clergyman, "we had thought of asking you to take my boy Lancelot as a pupil."

Mr. Inkpen shut his eyes and shook his head. "I could n't think of it," he said.

"And why not, may I ask?" the Reverend Charles inquired.

"I am too old to give a pupil that continual attention which is his due, for one reason," the architect replied. "For another—but I need n't mention it."

But, being pressed upon this point, Mr. Inkpen made known his second objection.

"I like Lancelot very much," said he, in a weeping voice. "In fact, I think I am justified in saying that your boy and I, Mr. Crane, have always been very good friends. But, sir, I don't forget, and I can't forget, that it was to a piece of boyish mischief that we nearly owed the destruction of the Cathedral. I can conceive of no more terrible catastrophe, short of a European war, than the disaster which nothing but chance, and the hand of Divine Providence, so narrowly averted."

The father and uncle set themselves to overcome this difficulty; and at length, after a great deal of persuasion, Mr. Inkpen agreed to receive Lance as his pupil for a term of three, four, or five years; the term to be concluded at the end of the third year, at the option of the parent. Upon the first of October next ensuing, Lancelot was to be bound apprentice; signed, sealed, and delivered for a premium of three hundred guineas.

"We can pay the premium out of the balance at the bank, without going to Lance's trustees at all," said the Reverend Charles joyously. "My dear Dick, what a benefactor you are!"

With such happy facility was Lancelot's future planned; and he beheld a mark set up, beyond which, as the Reverend Charles had observed some three or five times since Lancelot came into the world, his real life was really to begin; and he was clothed upon with a singular, delusive sense of distinction, of which he was so keenly conscious that he wondered the people in the street did not remark him. To his bourne, he thought, the peaceful way ran straight and smooth between flowery banks. Easy hours of congenial work, free hours in the open air, a home full of arm-chairs and good cheer; towards such a prospect the architect braced his youthful energies. And, together with the thought of Dolly, the remembrance of that rare possibility ran in his mind, the foretaste of a rich and dim future. Thus his relations with her were so pleasurable, that he went in wholesome fear of disturbing that nice equilibrium. He resolutely declined to contemplate marriage or betrothal, conceiving those holy estates, however blissful, to be still estates of bondage.

The summer waned into dust and dull green; Miss Glossop went home to keep house for her father the Canon, who had come home at length; and Lancelot led his team into the field to play the last match of the season, and won it.

Upon the morning appointed for his first appearance in Mr. Inkpen's office, Lancelot arrived there at seven minutes past nine.

"Seven minutes a day, forty-two minutes a week, one hundred and sixty-eight minutes a month—you can reckon for yourself the amount of

time lost in a year by the habit of unpunctuality," observed Mr. Inkpen, with severity.

"It shan't happen again, sir."

"You will oblige me by working until seven minutes past six, instead of leaving at six, this evening," said Mr. Inkpen; and he set the new pupil to trace an elaborate plan of the drainage of a brewery.

Before six o'clock, Lance had discovered that the process of mechanical drawing is not so easy as it looks. He finished the tracing with fatal rapidity; and when he got up from his stool to go, Mr. Inkpen tore that work of art in pieces, and bade him take the drawing home and trace it again. Lancelot expostulated.

"Have n't I done enough drainage for one day, sir? I want to learn architecture," he said sulkily.

The old man looked at his hopeful pupil over his spectacles, with a sour grin; but he said not a word, good or bad, and as Lancelot passed beneath the Cathedral on his way home that venerable edifice seemed to grin at him, too. The next day his master set him to survey the roof of a warehouse for alterations and repairs. Lancelot nearly lost his life by sliding down the slates into a skylight; but his heels catching in the gutter, he returned unharmed to the office, black as a sweep in the soot, with a smeary little drawing, presenting problems that would not be resolved by any known process of mathematics; so that he had to do the work all over again. He was counting upon Saturday afternoon and evening to recompense him for these sordid toils; but upon Saturday morning Mr. Inkpen suggested that he should spend his spare time in making a careful sketch of the north porch of the Cathedral.

Mr. Inkpen was an old gentleman of great piety; and, regarding all flesh as grass, and corrupt exceedingly, he praised no one, unless they were dead, for fear that corruption should increase. His pupil presently learned to be content so long as he escaped a sour reproach; and, after a while, a little success followed upon his labors. He began to obtain the mastery of that stubborn and rebellious implement, his pencil. Then, after a series of engagements, in which he was routed with great loss, he had carried the outworks of that frowning citadel. And by that time three years of his apprenticeship were expired.

CHAPTER XI

Miss Eleanor Warrilow was accustomed to regard what she called her soul as an entity having a separate existence from herself; a thing indefinable, blind, suffering from hereditary disease, standing in jeopardy every hour of some tremendous condemnation; so that it required constant spiritual medicine and solace, and a continual series of miraculous

interpositions, to save it from remediless destruction. And after that distressing interview with the sad wife of the commercial traveller, Miss Warrilow beheld her soul as a storm-beaten bark adrift upon black waters, with never a star alight to steer by. The subtle casuistry of the Church, in which she had been nurtured, taught that the consecrated minister of the oracles of God was Heaven's ambassador, the representative of the one true faith; surcharged with the message of that faith; so that the man was in some sort not only a mere vessel or vehicle, but himself the message. The identification of the man and his teaching is more or less inevitable; and although Miss Warrilow refused to give full credence to Mrs. Penfold's story, her estimate of her spiritual guide, the Reverend Vyvyan Glossop, was shaken; and the light hitherto shed upon her by that apostle of light was darkened.

She went little abroad after that memorable evening, going only to the Cathedral, and to visit one or two sick persons in the district the Canon had assigned her, into which he never set foot himself. She remained shut up in her chamber with the crucifix on the wall, for hours; anxiously reading solemn, inconclusive works upon theology, in which the authors were apparently trying to persuade themselves of something they could n't come to believe in any other way, with depressingly small result; praying much, brooding more, and—in the ancient phrase—eating her heart. Uncle Dick, who held some observation of her in his lazy way, noted that the cheek-bones began to show through the pallid skin, that little wrinkles began to crease themselves about the sad mouth, that the pale blue eyes had a strained and shifty look. "Parsons' work," said Uncle Dick to himself, shaking his head. "The hand of the Church is evident. I doubt it 's gone too far. And what a pretty girl, and a nice girl, she might be."

It befell, on a dull November afternoon, that Eleanor took her soul and its troubles out for an airing. The heavy sky lowered over the city like a pall; the streets wore an air of stolid melancholy; there was a gritty taste in the air; and Eleanor took the shortest way out of the town, which led her to Angler's Green. The level sward was solitary, gray, and very quiet; only the ripple of the river, coiling, lead-colored, between its crumbling banks, rose upon the air; and a sudden sense of utter loneliness descended upon Eleanor. She looked at her life, running to waste lead-colored like the river, and there was no pleasure in it; she looked for the spiritual prospect, dimly splendid, with which she had been wont to solace herself; and the vision was hid from her. She had no friends to whom she might turn; for the single pursuit of one form of piety alienates the devotee from the rest of mankind; if she thought of Uncle Dick, it was but to dismiss the image of a lazy epicurean; with her mother she had scarce a thought or hope in common, and to the Canon she could not go. Eleanor stood still, a solitary black figure in the drear landscape of level

green, and leafless trees, and dull river, and mist; and began to weep quietly behind her veil, in sheer pity for herself, since there was none other to pity her. Standing thus, she was aware of a lean black figure striding across the stepping-stones, and Canon Glossop came up to her.

"A lonely spot, a lonely day, and—to me—a lonely time, Miss Warrilow," said the Canon.

From the Cathedral tower, lost in the haze, the bells began to chime for evening service, one—*two,* one—*two,* in the minor. Walking beside the Canon, Eleanor was conscious that her thoughts of him began there and then to change. In spite of her own judgment, the man's personal presence was influencing her. Perhaps the Canon was conscious of this; perhaps, for a long time, he had been trading upon his knowledge.

"I am so sorry for—your great grief," said Eleanor.

"Sympathy is a precious gift," said the Canon. "More especially when it is offered by those who belong to the household of Christ."

They walked on side by side for a while, and the chiming bells filled up the interval.

"The need of sympathy—human sympathy, and human companionship," the Canon began once more, "seems immanent in man's nature." Here the Canon went on to illustrate his meaning from the histories contained in the New Testament. "So we may take it," he concluded, "that the need is a divinely implanted necessity, which we are not only permitted, but commanded, to satisfy. Do you not think so, Eleanor?"

The clergyman used the Christian name quite naturally, as he had sometimes done before. But to Eleanor, trying to discover to what this talk was tending, the word was the red glimmer of a danger signal.

"One has always looked to the divine ordinances as sufficient to supply all our need," Eleanor said, feeling compelled to say something.

They had reached the spindle-legged foot-bridge which spanned the river. The Canon paused and leaned against the rail. The sinking sun, a red and sullen eye, peered through the fog-bank at the two; his red reflection wavered in the dull stream, and a wandering gleam lit upon the looming Cathedral tower, turning it faintly crimson. Eleanor somehow connected the ruddy splashes with the danger signal vaguely imaged in her mind.

"I have always regarded the marriage bond as eternal and indissoluble," observed the clergyman, his lower lip beginning to tremble. "The world allows a succession of marryings and giving in marriage—not so the eternal law. And the world, at the same time, admits no other spiritual relationship as possible. Hence, if I were minded to ask one to console with, say, such a one as myself, I could not do so, save under the cover—the ostensible cover—of marriage."

Miss Warrilow, conscious of a certain nervous trepidation, told herself that the Canon was talking merely for the sake of conversation.

"That," went on the Canon, fixing his eyes upon her, "is not my fault. Is it, Eleanor?"

"I do not understand what you mean, Mr. Glossop," Eleanor said.

"It is very simple," answered the Canon, still holding her in his glance. "Supposing I were fain to live a lonely, solitary, intensely miserable life no longer, bereaved as I am, I could not change my unhappy state save under the guise of matrimony."

The sun gradually closed his red eye, as though, having satisfied his curiosity as to the man and the woman talking together on the bridge, he winked in a large and solemn manner; and the river turned to lead again, and the Cathedral tower, whose bells had fallen silent, faded and was lost in the gathering dusk. Eleanor, vaguely frightened, made as though she would go; but the Canon laid his twitching hand upon her hand, as it rested upon the rail; and although Eleanor withdrew it, she stood still while he spoke.

"The communion between us has been very close and very precious to me, Eleanor," said Mr. Glossop. "And although of late I have fancied that you cared less than your wont for spiritual conversation, I know that we have been very closely knit together. . . . Need I say more? I do not want to press the matter—I would not attempt a single word of persuasion——"

Despite those premonitions of danger, if the clergyman had struck her in the face Miss Warrilow would not have received a shock more astounding. A sensation of physical repulsion towards this twitching, green-eyed, black-bearded presence shook her from head to foot; the whole of Mrs. Penfold's story returned upon her mind with a rush, together with the remembrance of Mrs. Glossop's patient, kindly face; and in that moment Eleanor believed that the man who was capable of formulating such a proposition scarce six months after the death of his wife was also capable of the behavior of which Mrs. Penfold had accused him. The real Glossop stood revealed, a monstrous deformity. Eleanor looked the apparition in the face, turned her back upon it, and walked swiftly away, choking with shame and indignation. But the Canon overtook her in a stride or two. The patch of swarthy cheek showing above his black beard had turned a dull red.

"What do you mean by this, Eleanor—what do you mean by this?" said the Canon. It was plain, from his voice and manner and his clenching hands, that Mr. Glossop had lost control of his emotions. Eleanor quickened her pace without replying.

"Answer me, if you please," said the Canon, between his teeth.

"How dare you speak to me like this!" Eleanor was conscious that the retort was not only undignified but inadequate.

"I have made you," said the Canon, "a definite and an honorable proposal. You shall answer me—I *will* be answered!"

They had reached the wicket gate which led into the road by this time. The Canon, by leaning his back upon the gate, barred the way with his person.

"I must ask you for an answer," he repeated, visibly trembling with anger.

"Mr. Glossop, please allow me to pass," said Eleanor.

"Answer my question, if you please," said the Canon.

Eleanor, looking all round for help, descried the highly respectable figure of Miss Starling, as that lady emerged from her house, crossed her little bridge, and came towards her, unseen by Mr. Glossop, whose back was towards the road. Perceiving that succor was at hand, Eleanor plucked up her courage.

"You are accustomed to bullying defenseless women, I know," she said, looking the clergyman in the face. "I have heard about that."

The Canon, with a great and visible effort, recovered control of himself in part.

"Miss Warrilow," said he, "if I have been unwittingly betrayed into the use of some hasty expressions, I tender you my apologies. My nerves have been greatly shattered of late. I—I am painfully conscious that I am not always myself."

"Canon Glossop, please allow me to pass." By this time, Miss Starling was within some twenty paces of the gate.

"May I beg of you to explain the words you used just now, before you go?" said the Canon, carefully modulating his voice, and moving a little aside as he spoke, still, however, keeping his hand upon the gate.

"How do you do, Canon Glossop?" said Miss Starling blandly, at his elbow; and the clergyman started and turned with every mark of the most lively confusion. Try as he might, he was totally unable to compose his tremulous lips and shaking hands. With an effusive apology, he held the gate open; and Eleanor, greeting Miss Starling and excusing herself in a breath, passed the twittering Canon with the slightest inclination of the head, and hurried away.

"What dreadful weather, Canon, is it not?" said Miss Starling, with an obvious assumption of having interrupted a chance meeting without having noticed anything unusual in the manner of the two persons concerned. "I admire Miss Warrilow's courage in venturing out for a walk. She keeps so much indoors that I am often alarmed for her health."

The Canon, who was casting about in his mind for some plausible explanation of a situation which, under the skilful guidance of the most mischievous tongue in Northborough, must lead to a disastrous access of scandalous gossip, was understood to remark that there was nothing like fresh air.

"No, indeed," replied the lady. "But pray tell me, Canon—I am always a little anxious about dear Eleanor—whether" (here Miss Starling

lowered her voice to a sympathetic inflection) "after your long absence" (voice recovering) "you thought her looking better? I always think that one who sees with what one may term a fresh eye, sees so much more clearly than those who——" Miss Starling, not quite sure of the end of the sentence, came to an interrogative pause, looking brightly at the Canon.

"I fear," said Mr. Glossop, "that trouble of mind, always so much more difficult to deal with than mere trouble of body, has much to do with——" The Canon, feeling his way, resorted in his turn to the interrogative pause. Miss Starling kindly filled it up.

"Ah, dear me, yes! How sad, is it not?" she said, also feeling her way.

Miss Starling, who, having remarked the Canon and Miss Warrilow talking together, from an upper window of her house, had come out with no other intention than that of seeing what material for friendly gossip she might pick up, now turned back towards her house, the Canon stalking solemnly beside her.

"It has fallen to my lot," he went on, "to give such counsel to Miss Warrilow (in common with many others who come to me) as I am able. You will easily understand," hinted the clergyman, who thought he saw a way out of his difficulties opening before him, "that such counsel is not always very palatable, either to give or to receive."

"I have always thought that the duties of a minister of the Gospel are often of a most delicate and trying nature," said Miss Starling, treading warily.

"They are indeed," responded the Canon, with sighing emphasis. "They are indeed. But, I am often compelled to observe how much lighter they might sit upon his shoulders, if the congregation did but lend intelligent aid to the pastor. Now, in this very instance of which we have been speaking, a friend—a woman—might do much where the minister must, almost of necessity, fail."

"I need hardly say that I—as a personal friend of—if I could do anything——" responded Miss Starling suggestively.

The Canon, who saw his way grow clearer and still clearer, suddenly assumed a brisk and magisterial manner.

"I certainly think you might, Miss Starling. At any rate, I would leave no stone unturned to induce the person in question to follow my advice. The matter is plain and simple—there are no metaphysics, no intricacies of spiritual trial concerned. In a word, I have been advising marriage."

"Marriage!" echoed Miss Starling. She wished immediately that she had received the proposition as though she had known all about it beforehand; but she was startled out of her presence of mind.

"I have been advising marriage," went on the Canon, as though

she had not spoken, "ever since certain facts came to my knowledge. Indeed—by a singular coincidence—we were talking upon the very subject when you came up just now."

Miss Starling would have greatly preferred not to ask the question; but she was lost in conjecture, and a burning curiosity left her no choice.

"Whom should she——? I mean, is there any particular person——?" faltered the lady, with a becoming embarrassment.

The Canon's restless hand went to his mouth, and hovered there, and grasped his black beard. By this time, he saw his road quite clear before him; and he hesitated. But not for long.

"Really," said he presently, "I find myself in a singularly painful position. On the one hand, as Miss Warrilow's friend, I should like to place the opportunity of helping her in your power; while, on the other, circumstances make it exceedingly difficult and unpleasant to myself even to hint to you the facts which alone would enable you to do so."

Miss Starling gave utterance to an inarticulate murmur, intended to convey a general sympathetic acquiescence.

"The tortuous windings of the human spirit are so extraordinary that, really, one is inclined to say that the longer one lives the less one knows of poor human nature," said the Canon, with the air of one whose innate modesty compels him to make a damaging admission. "Two years ago, had any one, even a brother minister, hinted to me that one who, humanly speaking, is undoubtedly an elect person, might confuse the messenger with the message—might hearken to the voice itself rather than to its utterance—might even come to look upon that messenger, and hearken to that voice, for their own sake—had any one, I say, even hinted at the bare possibility, I should have laughed the suggestion to scorn."

"Mr. Glossop, you don't mean to say——" cried the lady, startled out of her discreet composure once more.

"Yet," pursued the Canon, "that thing has happened. Doubtless, though unwittingly, I am much to blame. I speak, of course, in the strictest and most candid confidence. And it is therefore in answer to your question, that it is not so much the person who—the person which—it is not, in fact," said the Canon, finding himself a little involved—"the point, I would say, is rather negative than positive. I place my hopes in what has been called the expulsive force of a new affection."

They had reached the corner of the street by this time, and the Canon, who, having said all that he wished to say, had no intention of saying another word, stopped and held out his hand.

"I feel sure, Miss Starling," said he, grasping Miss Starling's hand, and gazing into her face with a kind of earnest resignation, "that I may rely upon your kindness and discretion. Good-night."

The Canon returned to his study; and the conflict of emotion through which he had passed bringing on an acute attack of neurotic diathesis,

he betook himself to his accustomed prophylactic. Soon his baffled desire, and futile indignation, and the process of mean retaliation he had set a-rolling, faded from him as though they had never been.

Meanwhile, Miss Starling was industriously piecing the Canon's innuendoes into an intelligible story. She was a happy and contented schoolmistress that evening, for she had a table before her spread with the fare she loved.

And meanwhile, in a bare chamber with a crucifix hanging on the wall, under the shadow of the Cathedral, which towered into the serene air, between the old maid maliciously busy, and the clergyman, huddled in his world of giant dreams, Eleanor Warrilow was pacing up and down, up and down, her fingers locked together.

CHAPTER XII

Miss Starling, that blameless virgin, held a female gathering of selected friends; and the talk ran in channels which led indirectly to the scandalous. The selected friends went home, and plied their several confidential maids with injudicious confidences; and the several maids sought out *their* selected friends (both men and women, but especially women), and repeated dubious rumors with a specious air of impartiality. "Mind, I 'm not saying it 's true. They tell you to believe nothing of what you hear, and only half of what you see, as the saying is. But she says to me, says she——" And so it came about that Mr. Penfold, Our Mr. Penfold of the Pelagic Fur Company, looked up the street and down the street, as he approached the entrance to Mr. Thornhaigh's office, as though he feared some hostile observation; and, entering Uncle Dick's room, closed the door behind him with an appearance of mistrustful caution.

Mr. Penfold, soon after his introduction to Mr. Thornhaigh, had engaged himself in business relations with that financier; and he was constantly in and out of Uncle Dick's office, into which it was his pleasure and privilege to import the gossip and scandal of three counties, picked up in his voyagings.

"If my wife, Mrs. Penfold, was to see me now, sir," observed Mr. Penfold, a cheerful smile lighting up his ruddy countenance, "there 'd be what you might term a little discordance upon the domestic hearth. It 's in vain I say to her, business is business all the world over, and the less we permit business to invade the—as I say, the domestic hearth—the better."

"What 's the matter, Penfold?"

"Well, sir," said Mr. Penfold, sitting down with a confidential air, "as between man and man, I don't believe it. And so I told my better half; I told her straight, Mr. Thornhaigh."

"Don't believe what?"

"A nod," said Mr. Penfold, with great cheerfulness, "is as good as a wink to a blind horse. As between man and man, I can see as far through a brick wall as most people. Now what"—Mr. Penfold suddenly exchanged his confidential tones for the brisk accents of his business voice—"what about the balance due on those preference shares, sir?"

"Look here, before we get to business, I want to know what you mean with all this mystery," said Uncle Dick.

"Least said, soonest mended. And speaking for myself, I never give a minute's heed to women's chatter," said Mr. Penfold.

"I know you don't," retorted Uncle Dick. "But that's no reason why you should n't tell me the latest scandal."

Mr. Penfold dropped his gaze to the floor, and remained silent.

"Look here, Penfold," said Uncle Dick abruptly, "if there's any dirty piece of gossip going about which concerns me, I wish you 'd tell me and be done with it. If it does n't, I don't want to hear it."

There was that in Mr. Thornhaigh's tone which gave Mr. Penfold the final stimulus he required.

"If you ask me straight, sir, I should say you *had* ought to know it," said he. "And, begging your pardon for mentioning it, but people will have it that there is something betwixt you and a certain young lady, sir."

"That may be true or it may not," said Uncle Dick composedly. "What next?"

"Well, sir, that young lady's name, what I can hear of it, is being hawked about in certain circles of society in a—in a what you might call—a deleterious light," said Mr. Penfold, with a deprecating air.

"Never mind the name. What are they saying?"

"I never give any heed to women's chatter and tomfoolery, myself," said Mr. Penfold. "Heard too much of it in my time. But they do say—but there, what's the use of repeating such things."

"Out with it, Penfold. I want to know."

"Well, they do say, since you will have it, sir, that Miss War—that the lady in question got a little bit what you might call infatuated with the Reverend Mr.—with a certain clerical gentleman, who shall be nameless," said Mr. Penfold, with cheerful unction—"and that—to put it short—she proposed to him, and he would n't have it. And how could he, seeing that his wife has been dead only a few months?"

"That sounds like a lie," said Uncle Dick. "I would rather not hear the name of the lady, Penfold—but who is the clergyman?"

Mr. Penfold looked at the door, hitched his chair a little forward, and bent confidentially towards Mr. Thornhaigh.

"The Reverend Mr. Glossop," said he.

"What rot!" said Uncle Dick. "Where did you hear this?"

"My wife, Mrs. Penfold, heard it from Mrs. Saunders, the Dean's butler's wife," answered Mr. Penfold. "But Lord! I don't believe a word of it, sir. As you say. And that 's why I would rather my better half did not know of my coming here, Mr. Thornhaigh. 'I know you 'll betray yourself, Samuel, if you do,' says she, 'the business or no business, that you 're always talking about. Miss Eleanor 's been a good friend to me,' she says, 'and if aught were to come between her and Mr. Thornhaigh out of this house, I should never forgive myself, nor you neither.' But you know what women are, Mr. Thornhaigh."

"Not I," said Uncle Dick. "And now you 've got that off your mind, Penfold, we 'll get to business. . . . About those shares?"

Uncle Dick walked homewards with a brooding face that evening. There had been a light fall of snow during the afternoon, and the streets glimmered white in the dim shine of the scattered street lamps. As Uncle Dick descended the hill, he was aware of a black figure approaching, a figure that corresponded with the image in his mind at that moment. Recognizing Miss Warrilow, he half paused, then checked himself, his hand in mid-air on its way to his hat-brim. For the dark figure passed him without a sign of recognition, with a white face staring fixedly in front of it; a face that, in its look of misery, detached itself from the surrounding glimmer and gloom, floating past like a bodiless apparition. Uncle Dick, with that impression strong in his mind, was conscious of a strong access of pity, mixed with some emotion without a name. That the scandal concerning Miss Warrilow had any foundation in fact, he did not believe; and yet he felt that something must have happened which led to this misconstruction. He had a mind to go directly to the Reverend Charles, as a comprehensive repository of urban gossip; but when he entered the house a familiar tinkle of cups and saucers and a confused murmur of conversation broke upon his ears. "At it again," said Uncle Dick irritably. "I never saw a man with such a passion for tea-fights as the Reverend." And Mr. Thornhaigh betook himself and his grievances to the conservatory. He was still smoking and brooding there when a servant announced that a lady wished to see him; and, going into the hall, Uncle Dick found Mrs. Penfold.

"You may think it strange of me, Mr. Thornhaigh," said Mrs. Penfold, in her quick, nervous utterance, "but I could n't rest till I had seen you, after having said something to Mr. Penfold this morning, which I had better have left unsaid, a thousand thousand times, knowing Samuel's tongue as I do, and a wicked piece of gossip it is, sure enough. And I said to myself, I know how kind Mr. Thornhaigh is, and I know I can rely upon him, and me being so fond of Miss Eleanor and all, I just slipped on my bonnet and shawl and ran round."

Mrs. Penfold, eying Uncle Dick with a frightened look, paused for lack of breath.

"Glad to see you," said Mr. Thornhaigh, composedly regarding her. "What 's the trouble?"

Mrs. Penfold seemed to find a difficulty in replying. "Really, now I am here, sir, I hardly like to say," said she, looking this way and that, any way to avoid Mr. Thornhaigh's steady observation.

That gentleman seated himself upon an oaken chest, opposite to his visitor, and nursed his leg and smoked in silence.

"I 'm sure you 'll believe me when I say I came with the best of good intentions, and a pure heart to do what 's right," said Mrs. Penfold.

"Surely," said Uncle Dick. "Surely, surely."

"I would n't wish to mention no names——" began Mrs. Penfold, after some further hesitation.

"I had rather you did not mention names," put in Uncle Dick.

"But," continued Mrs. Penfold, with firmness, "when I hear a kind and good young lady, who has been a good friend to me, ill spoken of, in a way that 's fit to ruin her prospects in life, all because of another person—a wicked, artful man, Mr. Thornhaigh," said Mrs. Penfold explosively, "why, then, I can't bear it, and what 's more I won't. It 's a lie, sir, that 's what it is—a downright, cruel lie. And I know who it was set it on foot, what 's more."

"Oh," said Uncle Dick. "Ah. Well, now, you could n't tell me who it was, I suppose—without mentioning names."

"I *could*," returned the lady, with spiteful emphasis. She looked expectantly at Uncle Dick. There came sounds from the drawing-room, as of guests taking their leave. "Come this way," said Mr. Thornhaigh, and he led his visitor into the dining-room.

"Now," said Uncle Dick, "I don't know why you have come to me of all people, Mrs. Penfold; but since you have come—with the best of intentions, I am sure—we may as well get to the bottom of this business. There 's a silly piece of gossip afoot, it seems. You say you know who started it?"

Mrs. Penfold nodded. "Well I know it," said she. Her embarrassment had disappeared by this time; under the stimulus of the hated remembrance of Mr. Glossop, she had become alert and self-possessed.

"If I 've heard anything of the matter," pursued Uncle Dick, "it is that a certain person whom I will call A is said to have behaved in a—in an unusual and perfectly incredible and impossible way towards another person whom I will call B. I 'll do more—I 'll admit that B is a clergyman."

"And a wicked disgrace to the holy title," said Mrs. Penfold.

"Now, since it could n't be A who spread this report, was it B? Or was it——?"

"It was B, as I 'll take my Bible oath to my dying day," asseverated Mrs. Penfold.

"Well, if it was, the less said the better," said Uncle Dick. "What does it matter? Who believes a yarn like that?"

"Everybody believes it," answered Mrs. Penfold. "You're a stranger here, sir, and you perhaps don't know the place. An idle word like that in the air is enough to ruin any one. That's what vexes me so. And that's why I made bold to come to you, Mr. Thornhaigh, for you move in the higher circles of society, and a word from you would have a deal of weight. I'm sure you'd contradict any such story if it was told you, sir."

When Mrs. Penfold had taken her departure, Uncle Dick sought his brother-in-law.

"Did you hear any particular gossip in your assembled seraglio this afternoon, Charles?"

"Concerning which?" inquired the Reverend Charles.

"Concerning our friends across the road," said Uncle Dick.

"Oh, them. Yes, they talked about them a good deal, now I come to think of it," responded the parson. "Eleanor has been proposing to Glossop, it seems—so they say."

Uncle Dick looked at his placid brother-in-law.

"You didn't contradict 'em, I suppose?" said he.

The proposition seemed to strike the Reverend Charles as novel. "No, I don't know that I did, in so many words," he said, after a little reflection. "Why?"

"Why indeed?" said Uncle Dick. He seemed about to add something, and to check himself.

"She may have, you know," remarked the Reverend Charles lazily. "Any way, scarcely any one will speak to her now. It's hard on her, I'm afraid."

"Do you know, parson," said Uncle Dick, after a short pause, "I sometimes fear that you are undergoing a strange and fatal metamorphosis. I believe that you are changing organically. I don't know if you've noticed it—but you're turning into an old woman, Charles. It's the effect of comparative affluence upon a frugal clergyman. It would do you good to be ruined and beggared, my boy." Mr. Thornhaigh, who had approached the door as he spoke, shut it behind him to avoid any repartee that might be forthcoming. But there was none; the Reverend Charles being impervious to that kind of criticism.

Uncle Dick went his way, swearing softly to himself. "Good God, what a mean crowd it is!" said he. "The only decent girl in the place—except one, perhaps," he corrected himself, "and they round on her like this. And fattening on the money I brought 'em too. . . . The Penfolds seem very anxious I should marry her. I've often thought of it. Shall I? Why shouldn't I? . . . That would show these people what I thought of them."

CHAPTER XIII

To Lancelot, fully immersed in the study of his art, the tattle of the town was a thing of no account. By this time he had served his three years and more; the imperative necessity of unremitting toil, so ugly at first, had ceased to daunt him; he had formed the habit of work; he was on the way to delight in it like a glutton. And by this time scattered webs of scaffolding clung about the Minster, alow and aloft, within and without; gangs of brown and dusty workmen haunted the precincts; and excavations were in progress in the crypt. Mr. Inkpen was having his will of the ancient foundation at last.

Among the parts of the building under repair was a massive buttress which projected from the eastern wall of the chancel. The ground upon which the walls of the chancel rested being of a somewhat shifty nature, the old builders thought to counterbalance this disadvantage by the erection of a pier so great and wide that they found room in it for a tiny cell, approached by a narrow winding stair which was concealed within the buttress. Within the cell, which was lighted by a single slit, there was room for a man to stand or lie, and even to stretch himself. The chamber bore traces of occupation. Mr. Inkpen held that here was the penitential cell, or temporary prison, of the adjoining monastery; while the Dean contended that the chamber was designed for the habitation of an anchorite.

Here, some few days after Mr. and Mrs. Penfold's visit to his uncle, in the brown, cold, earth-smelling gloom of the cell, Lancelot was busy with note-book and pencil and two-foot rule, when he heard a step on the stone stairway; and Miss Dorothy Glossop stood in the doorless opening. Dorothy had grown into a neat and slim young lady, with foot and hand and everything of her in a neat and slim proportion, save her light gray eyes, which were large and wide open, and her light brown hair, coiled in thick plaits at the back of her small head. Lancelot, who was developing an eye for pictorial effects, noted that her face showed with a peculiar pallor in the dusky shadow, and that her hair and her dress were tremulously stirred by the winter wind that blew shrilly through the slit of the window.

"What are you so busy about?" asked Dorothy; but she paid no attention to the elaborate explanation which Lancelot was beginning. "How dirty it makes your hands!" said she.

"Is that all you came to say?" inquired the architect. "One can't work in kid gloves, you know. Mr. Inkpen would turn me into the streets if I wore gloves on the job."

"Supposing he did, what would you do then?" asked Dorothy idly.

"Set up for myself, I suppose," said Lance. "Brass plate, designed by self. Advertise in local papers."

"You would n't really, would you?"

"How do I know?" returned Lance. "Why? What 's the good of talking? Look here, if you don't mind waiting a few minutes, it will be too dark to see, and then I can come with you."

Dorothy leaned against the lined and gnarled piece of timber which had once made a door-post, and watched the young man prying into the stonework, and measuring, and setting down figures as though there were nothing else in life. Outside the thick walls the wind went by with a heavy rush and a rustle of withered leaves, that died away, and rose again, and again fell into silence. Dorothy listened for about the space of one minute before her patience gave out.

"I can't wait any longer," said she. "I 'm so cold. What are you so busy drawing?"

"Do you see those marks?" Lancelot indicated a stone whose face was graven with certain illegible hieroglyphics. "Those are Masons' Marks. Every mason had his own mark, or sign, as they have still. But this one is like no other I have seen. So I 'm just sketching it in."

Dorothy did not take the trouble to examine this curiosity more nearly. "What curious things you care for!" said she. "A mark 's just a mark, and it 's done with."

"And what do you care for, for instance?"

"Not much," Dorothy answered. "Nothing in Northborough. That 's why I 'm going away."

"What?"

Dorothy nodded her head. Lancelot could not see her face clearly through the dusk.

"Perhaps you would n't mind explaining a little," said he.

"I can't stand this place any longer," said Dorothy.

"What 's the trouble, Dolly?"

"Do *you* want to stay here forever?" Dorothy returned. "Are you going to live all your life in Northborough, and become 'our worthy and esteemed townsman'? You might become an Alderman, even a Mayor. Would you like to be a Mayor?"

"I 'd rather be Cathedral Surveyor," said Lance.

"Is that the top of your ambition? Well, I should think you might achieve it," said Dorothy, with some appearance of sarcasm.

"I don't pretend to be ambitious," said Lance sulkily. "Besides, what does it matter? I want to know why you are going away. Has your father been bothering you much?" he added.

"I 've come to the conclusion I ought to go away from him and earn my own living," said Dorothy, after a short pause.

"Oh," said Lancelot. "Has anything particular been happening?"

Dorothy made no reply. "If you 're in any trouble that a person could help, you might as well tell a person," said Lance.

"There 's nothing to tell," said Dorothy, in whose mind the fear and distrust of her parent mingled with the remembrance of the gossip of Northborough concerning her friend Eleanor Warrilow, and rankled. "I can't stand this place any more, that 's all. I hate the place, and I loathe the people. So I 'm going away."

Lancelot perceived that something was going on of which he was ignorant; and, careless as he was of local gossip and the petty affairs of the tea-table, he could not guess what this might be; and he was conscious of a sudden, cold premonition of coming trouble and disturbance. "Let 's come down," he said. The two emerged from the cell which seemed to cut them off from all mankind, into a gray world of twilight and a blustering wind smelling of the open fields. Beyond the towering shoulder of the Cathedral, the dying sunset of pale gold, all barred with sombre clouds, shone faintly luminous; beneath their feet, the houses and gardens lay in a heavy shadow, spotted here and there with yellow lights. To Lance, that prospect of night's solemn approach, beheld from the high place whence the Minster towered into the void air, was both dear and familiar. To-night it seemed to wear a melancholy and brooding aspect, the presage of inevitable change, as he paced with Dorothy up and down the flagged walk that ran beneath the pinnacled buttresses.

"You men who have something to do in the world don't know what a girl's life is," Dorothy went on. "A girl must wait about for some one to come along and marry her, and all the while she must pretend that she never thinks of any such thing. And meanwhile she puts on her best frock and goes to silly parties, and orders the dinner, and arranges the flowers, and tries to coax her father into a better temper. And she might as well be dead for all the use she is, or even for any enjoyment she gets out of it."

Dorothy spoke vehemently, but without bitterness; and Lancelot listened to her talk, as a thing new to his experience. His irritation had vanished, and he felt instead an access of sympathy for her. In the increasing darkness, her form was indistinct and alluring as a figure beheld in a dream. He desired to console her by methods more direct than words; but she appeared so confidingly unconscious, so wrapt apart in the tumult of her mind, that Lancelot rebuked himself for the impulse. He told himself, firmly, that she was no more to him—as yet—than a friend.

"Can't I help you?" said he. "I should like to do something for you if I could, you know."

"No one can do anything for me," said Dorothy briskly. "I must help myself. I must live my own life. And the only thing I see to do is to become a hospital nurse."

"Will your father let you go?"

"Yes—I 've settled that. I 'm going to London."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

Lancelot echoed the word dismally. He foresaw that in some indefinite way this change was but the precursor of wider changes; that the old, settled, leisurely order of things with which he had grown up, once deranged, would crack and fly in all directions, upsetting his own private scheme of life. There is a time of life when a youth of an easy temperament would fain look forward along a smooth pathway laid for him all the way through life, leading by gentle declensions to the grassy edge of the grave. So Lancelot had planned his future; and Dorothy's future had, incidentally, made part of his own. But his destiny comes to every man, soon or late; and Lancelot felt the iron fingers already plucking at his sleeve. He yielded to the touch. If he could not remain quietly at Northborough, taking his pleasure in Dorothy's friendship, and waiting, as it were, for love to come leisurely, if love would—why, then, he must follow where fortune led.

"All right, I'll come to London, too," said he. "I ought to have some London experience, as a matter of fact; here, you see, I only——"

"You'd better not," interrupted Dorothy. "You're very well off where you are, and I think you'd be very silly to change."

"Why, you said just now——" began Lancelot, rather aggrieved, when Dorothy again interrupted him, elaborately explaining that she was considering his life for him as a whole, and taking broad views of the future, when she implied that he was too easily contented.

Still talking, they turned the corner of the Cathedral, and the north wind leaped at them and blew the words from between their teeth. When they came to the nail-studded front door of the Reverend Canon Glossop's residence, Lancelot, somewhat moved, had an indistinct idea of proffering a vow of perpetual allegiance to his friend, who looked so little and fragile in the blustering night. But he kept silence; held Dorothy's hand in his own with a longer clasp than polite usage demands; heard the door close heavily and dully behind her; and went home with a troubled mind; angry with the trouble, and angry with himself for being troubled.

CHAPTER XIV

While Lancelot was conversing with Miss Dorothy Glossop, upon that stormy winter's afternoon, his uncle was deeply engaged with another young lady. Mr. Thornhaigh, still wrestling with his perplexities, still setting "should he?" against "should he not?" had discovered, about lunch-time, the necessity of a little light distraction. Accordingly, he had treated himself to lunch at "The Pair of Spurs"; and, finding some jovial acquaintances about a like business, the doubting swain had played two or three hundred up at billiards, with suitable accompaniments. Good drink acts in different ways upon different constitutions;

Mr. Thornhaigh's liquor inspired him with a mixture of vaguely amorous and vaguely religious enthusiasm. The wine still singing in his head, he left "The Pair of Spurs" towards four o'clock in the afternoon, and plunged into the cold and gusty twilight, as into a bath, with a sudden determination to seek out Miss Eleanor Warrilow. His flushed imagination, unwontedly alive, pictured her standing in a mellow gloom, shot through with port-wine hues, like the solemn light shed through a church window, calmly and devoutly waiting for him, even Uncle Dick. Of his precise destination he was uncertain; sometimes he found himself imaging a corner of the Cathedral, and at the same time mechanically rejecting that place as both cold and liable to interruption; and then his intelligence would assert itself for a moment, explaining to him that he was really only walking homewards just as usual; and, further, that he had chosen that time and that way because Miss Eleanor Warrilow was in the habit of attending the afternoon service.

Uncle Dick came to this conclusion and to the north door simultaneously; and in the open space before the entrance he stopped and looked about him, with a sudden irresolution. Supposing the people came out and found him standing there, they would (he thought) infallibly guess his errand. He would then present an absurd spectacle. He tried to think of some method by means of which he could avoid observation without going away; but no idea whatever occurred to him. This annoyed him. The sombre front frowned upon him; it seemed taller than usual; Uncle Dick threw his head back with a sudden desire to see the sky above the darkling pinnacles, and his hat fell off behind him. The wind blew it towards the north porch. "I must be very careful about this," thought Uncle Dick; and he began cautiously to stalk his hat. The organ began to peal from within the Minster; and Uncle Dick forgot his intention and stopped to listen. The solemn music was exactly what he had wanted; he had not been conscious of the want before, but he knew now what he had lacked without knowing it.

"Lost your hat, sir?" said a voice; and Uncle Dick, looking down with a start, beheld a wrinkled old bedesman of the Cathedral, holding a dusty hat towards him.

"Oh," said Uncle Dick, "I was just going to look for it. Thank you very much." A half-crown seemed to spring into his palm, and he pressed it upon the old man.

Mr. Thornhaigh had no time to remark the old man's evident astonishment, for he had caught sight of a familiar figure among the few people who were emerging from the Cathedral. For one moment he stood irresolute; the next, he was approaching Miss Warrilow with long strides.

As she greeted him, Uncle Dick was visited with one of his recurrent flashes of perception, and he noted something strange—he could not define what—in Miss Warrilow's appearance. Save that she was muffled about

the neck in fur, there was nothing unusual about her attire; and Uncle Dick set the impression to the account of his wine. He fell into an uncomfortable silence; his head spun and righted itself, and spun again; the skin of his face and hands was hot and prickling, although the wind was bitter. His brain drew clear again, and he plunged into speech.

"It seems a long time since I had the pleasure of seeing you," said he.

"I have been away," said Eleanor.

"Oh," said Uncle Dick. "Well—I am glad you are back again."

"Indeed," Eleanor went on, "I am going away again immediately;" and Uncle Dick saw his chance.

"It 's lucky I happened to meet you, then," he said eagerly. "Because I wanted very much to ask you a question I 've wanted to ask you for a long time——" Here, finding the sentence had escaped his control, he prudently stopped.

"Yes?" said Eleanor. There was a settled quiet about her demeanor that a little discouraged Uncle Dick; this was not, so far as he could recollect, quite what he had promised himself; but he persevered.

"Miss Warrilow," said he, "you know me—we 've known each other, if you 'll allow me to say so, for some time now. I 'm a man who 's had to shove his way through the thick of life as he could, without any education but what he could pick up for himself—a rolling stone, a restless kind of card—who 's tried twenty trades and never made a fortune at any of them. And now," pursued Uncle Dick, surprised, and even a little moved, at his own eloquence—"and now, here I am, drifted here after a bit of luck with a little money invested (though I don't say but what it may go the way of all the rest, one of these fine days), and——" Uncle Dick came to a dead pause and looked at Miss Warrilow, who was steadfastly regarding him. They both stopped, and stood facing each other on the pavement.

"I wanted to ask you to marry me, my dear," said Uncle Dick, with amazing ease. "If you thought you could, you know."

The dim and wavering lamp-light showed him a face as sharp and white as a quillet of paper. In the silence that followed, Mr. Thornhaigh had time to admire his own coolness in this crisis.

"Mr. Thornhaigh," said Eleanor, with great earnestness, "I believe you mean most kindly and truly—do not think me ungrateful when I say that I cannot—I ought not—it is utterly impossible for me—to listen to you. Believe me, there are reasons I cannot explain just now why I cannot——" She broke off, and began to walk forward.

"I would n't trouble you or worry you for the world," said Uncle Dick, a little dashed, but persevering still. "I don't want an answer all at once—it is n't fair to expect it, I know. But if——"

"Nothing—there is nothing, Mr. Thornhaigh, that can ever make any difference," Eleanor interposed, with the same steady earnestness.

Uncle Dick, seriously discouraged, thought heavily for a moment. Then he had an inspiration.

"If by any chance you should happen to be thinking of what—what some people are saying—not that you would notice things beneath notice like that—I should like to say, once and for all, that I would n't give a farthing for the whole measly crowd," said Mr. Thornhaigh.

"I had no thought," said Miss Warrilow, "of the world in what I said. Please, let us say no more—and believe me, Mr. Thornhaigh, I am not heartless or ungrateful. You will understand my reasons in a day or two."

By this time they had come to the iron gate which led into the garden of Miss Warrilow's home. She turned to Uncle Dick, holding out her hand, and the wind blew aside the fur boa which encircled her neck, the light from the lamp above the gateway falling sideways upon her.

"Good-by," she said.

Uncle Dick took her hand mechanically, staring at her, and holding her hand in his. "Good God!" he exclaimed. For Miss Warrilow's wealth of yellow hair was gone. She was cropped like a schoolboy. "Have you been ill?" he asked, with a sudden wild surmise that she had refused him because she retained the fatal consequences of some fell disease. Miss Warrilow's neck and cheek flushed an even crimson, and she hastily muffled her face again.

"I have been ill, very sorely ill, but not in body," she said, in a voice so low that Uncle Dick bent forward to catch her words. "But I found the one cure for all ills whatsoever, and I am healed. . . . Once again, forgive me—I shall always remember you in prayer."

Mr. Thornhaigh felt a slight pressure upon his fingers, the gloved hand which he held was withdrawn, and Miss Warrilow opened the iron gate, looked full at him once, with a sad and steadfast countenance as she shut the gate with a little, decisive clang, and turned away. Uncle Dick, stricken mute with amazement, watched the indistinct figure grow more indistinct as it receded, saw a gleam of light fall upon it for a moment from the opening door, and she was gone.

"Well—I am ——!" said Uncle Dick. He repeated that observation at intervals for an hour or so. "But perhaps it 's all for the best," he added.

CHAPTER XV

Mr. Thornhaigh made no appearance in public until lunch-time upon the day after his remarkable conversation with Miss Eleanor Warrilow. He presented a somewhat haggard and bloodshot aspect, as he sat at meat; but the Reverend Charles, who never remarked anything that was not forced upon his attention, prattled on as usual, happily

oblivious both of the traces of strain and stress in his brother-in-law's appearance, and of his son's evident preoccupation.

"I had a distressing interview—really, a *most* distressing interview—with dear old Mrs. Warrilow, this morning," said the Reverend Charles. "She came to me in great trouble, with a most extraordinary story. She tells me that Eleanor has gone into a convent, and taken the vows, without a word to any one."

"Has she, by God!" said Uncle Dick.

"Absolutely without telling even her own mother," continued the Reverend Charles. "It seems that poor Eleanor left home, ostensibly to pay a visit to a friend. The friend lives not far from the new Convent of Saint Ursula, which has just been dedicated by the Cardinal-Archbishop up here. Eleanor went there, was received by these people, and underwent all the rites of admission. They actually cut off her hair! I am not without sympathy with certain aspects of the Roman Communion, but some of their practices strike me as really rather revolting."

"Do you mean that Eleanor has actually become a nun?" asked Lancelot, shocked and dismayed.

"It 's sad, very sad," answered his father. "But there seems no help for it. The vows are as binding as the marriage pledge. They regard it, in fact, as a Celestial Betrothal."

Uncle Dick looked and listened, with a lowering countenance, and drank his wine, and looked and listened again.

"But why"—Lancelot with difficulty brought himself to frame words of such brutal signification—"why should they cut off her hair?"

"To take the vows is to die to the world and all its vanities," responded the clergyman. "The tonsure symbolizes the death to all carnal things."

Lancelot sat confounded and sorry. He saw his old friend removed from all acquaintance; gone out of knowledge without even a word of farewell. Here was another pin knocked from out the edifice of his future that he had so lightly constructed.

"It 's such a mistake to desert the Anglican Communion," pursued the Reverend Charles. "We provide all things necessary to salvation, at what I may term, in vulgar language, a lower price. We are just as spiritually dead to the world as they are," said the parson comfortably, refilling his glass. "But poor Eleanor may have received a Call. I am far from denying that to some natures the outward forms and stately ceremonials and multifold symbols of the Roman Church may even be said to be necessary elements. She may have had a real revelation. Who knows? It is not for us to judge harshly."

Then he rose from the table, brushed the crumbs from his rotund, seamless waistcoat, and wandered out of the room, humming the air of an anthem in his flexible little tenor.

Uncle Dick filled another glass of wine, the neck of the bottle rattling on the edge of the glass.

"I 'm going to town for a spell," said Mr. Thornhaigh. "Come along too. I 'll stand you. We 'll quit to-night. What?"

"I can't leave the office just yet. Wish I could. Every one 's going away, as far as I can see," said Lancelot dismally.

Uncle Dick took no notice of his nephew's refusal. He sat staring at the empty plates, an unlighted cigar in his fingers.

"I want a change," he said. "I did n't know how bad I wanted it till to-day. . . . I 've met parsons abroad," Mr. Thornhaigh went on, with apparent irrelevance. "I thought I knew the breed. But I did n't. I did n't know the half, by gad, I did n't! Now I want a little change."

So Uncle Dick went south by the express; Eleanor Warrilow was no more seen in Northborough Cross; and a little after, Dorothy Glossop also left her native city, by a train that started before breakfast. Lancelot would have said good-by to her at the station, but he slept until too late; and it is possible that Dorothy never forgot that unintentional defection.

So Lancelot was deprived of three familiar friends at a blow; and the streets and ways of the old city put on a particularly stale and tedious aspect after their departure. Lancelot would have gone to London, leaving his father alone, with but small compunction; but Mr. Inkpen would not hear of his leaving the office until the several pieces of work on which he was engaged were completed. "I won't have it said that any pupil of mine looked back after putting his hand to the plough," said the old man. "That 's what you want to do, I can see," and he read the aspiring youth a lecture on the evils of impatience. So Lancelot stayed where he was; contenting himself, as best he might, with such hasty scrawls as Dorothy vouchsafed in answer to his elaborate epistles. For both these children suffered at this time under the illusion proper to youth, the conviction (clouded though it was by a little, secret doubt) that the relation between any young man and any young woman may be governed by the rules of friendship alone.

Lancelot wrote of himself and his feelings, of his aspirations, of his discoveries in Art; those discoveries of youth which seem mint-new when they swim into nescience; and which are so soon to be recognized as the commonplaces they were before the Pyramids were founded. Dorothy wrote little of herself; telling only of her surroundings, and of her manner of life in hospital. She also mentioned, occasionally, that she had seen Mr. Thornhaigh. This, it would seem, made but meagre fare for even friendship to subsist upon; but Lancelot was contented enough; and carried in his breast-pocket the folded sheets of sprawling caligraphy, which looked as though they had been written with a split quill pen in a wager against time, until the packet became too bulky for convenience,

when he dutifully transferred part of it to a drawer in his desk, to repose beside some withered remnants of flowers and leaves. Still, he lived on from day to day in Northborough Cross as it were under protest. The place had lost its charm; the people seemed dully to resemble each other like a flock of sheep, and to repeat themselves like a set of wearisome automata; the very air had turned vapid and tasteless; when a new enchantment suddenly transformed the face of the old city.

For the youngest daughter of the Very Reverend the Dean came home, finished, from school. It was in the Cathedral that Lancelot beheld her for the first time, during the performance of an oratorio, wherein Miss Rosamund Venables played a solo upon the violoncello. Lancelot was immediately and completely overthrown, subjugated, and as it were trampled under foot by the mere sight of this slim young lady with the pointed features, dark eyes, and fine ruddy color, making melody which entranced and carried him quite out of himself.

He went to sleep that night with the philosopher's stone beneath his pillow; when he woke, the world was all gold; and gold for a season it remained. It is probable that neither Mr. Dean nor Mrs. Dean was entirely insensible to the fact that Mr. Lancelot Crane was a good and virtuous youth, a youth manifesting some promise of future achievement, and a youth, moreover, who had a little inheritance, bequeathed to him by his mother, when he came of age; and whose father and uncle seemed to possess the secret of increasing wealth. For Lancelot was invited to the Deanery, and before long he was permitted to come about the house whenever he chose.

These days (Lancelot vainly dreamed) might have touched perfection, had it not been for the huge slices of time that were inexorably demanded by his work. Lancelot lost all love for labor, counting these hours of intolerable tedium as grimly ravished from him and lost eternally. All the hours from dawn to moon-rise, and from moon-rise to dawn, were not enough to satisfy his lust of life; and still the river of daily circumstances swept away so many hours of potential felicity. And, at the same time, he began to put away the thought of Dorothy. He did not forget her; she lived indeed in his memory, but in a place assigned to her apart; where, by a strange illumination, he beheld, for the first time, a hundred trifling blemishes in his friend. Their letters became fewer and still fewer, and said less and less; and what they said now differed from what they used to convey.

So Lancelot rebuilt his pleasure-house of the future, and thanked his Maker for that it was so fair. Providence had sent Rosamund to him, and also sufficient means to support (some day) his trembling aspirations towards her; and he was inexpressibly grateful. He rose at three in the morning to gather flowers for her, and to get his work done so that he might gain that exquisite presence the sooner; he followed her like a

shadow; and when he sat alone with her, he was conscious of a miracle of happiness, marred only by the knowledge of its brief duration. And yet these two young people said no word of love. What they did say was trivial past recording; so that Lancelot, after a whole day with Rosamund, going about with his love-sickness so heavy upon him, so open and undisguised, that people smiled upon one another, would go to bed chilled by the thought that Rosamund might never have noticed his devotion after all.

Spring waned into summer; and Lancelot saw an alluring vision folding and unfolding before his eyes. He saw a wedding in the Cathedral; he heard the bells clash and the organ flute and thunder; he saw the old house in St. Catherine's Gate made new by his own device and art, opening its doors for the bride and bridegroom to come in; he saw—but here he would go no further; knowing that to anticipate even so much was to risk the anger of the jealous gods.

But presently a cloud rose upon the clear serenity of those midsummer days; and the lover was troubled with the doubt that comes to trouble all lovers. Was her mind towards him? Was it even conceivable that she, the unapproachable, should ever turn to a thing so mean and common as himself? Other people (it was undeniable) had loved and married and had children at their desire; and yet all the persons in the world, save two, seemed to live and move like players upon a distant stage, mere painted figures of soundless talk and gesture without meaning. Lancelot began to be tormented. He told himself that devotion should be self-reliant; and the plain fact remained to contradict him. He held it unfair to the lady to make an open declaration until he had attained a certain position in the world, or had performed some achievement worthy of consideration. Moreover, there were other men in the world; the sons of county families, with family places in the country, and family houses in the town, who came about the Deanery; and Lancelot, becoming acutely conscious that he was but an architect's apprentice, after all, made acquaintance with that cold and bitter shadow of love's brightness, jealousy.

One evening, Lancelot, going to sup at the Deanery, beheld the sunset sky of rose merging into orange, and orange changing into green, the hue of the moving sea, where huge cloud-galleons, all of rose melting into pearly white, were hanging above tower and broken arch and ancient wall, that lifted dumb, unfeatured countenances to the dying radiance. Night, shrouded in her dim cloak gleaming with stars, drew close the curtains of the sun, breathing deep airs of peace; and Lancelot, sitting with Rosamund beneath the grave trees that whispered to themselves and held converse with the gathering shadows, felt all his excellent resolves swiftly ebbing out of him. For time and place and chance had conspired together against those children, in their old, remorseless,

irremediable way; and when the two came to the parting which hurt them so cruelly, though it was but for the night, the girl was possessed of an inestimable treasure, and the boy exulted and talked aloud as he walked, in the triumph of a stupendous discovery.

CHAPTER XVI

For five days the lovers went about in a state of happiness, high and inexpressible, yet tremulous. They had plighted their troth; not death himself should part them; how much less, therefore, parents and guardians or unforeseen misfortune; especially as they had resolved to put off a formal declaration of their betrothal to the said parents and guardians until a more convenient season. "For," said Rosamund, "let us be happy while we can. When we 're ready to marry, we 'll tell them, and get all the fuss over at once." And yet, with all these precautions, they were conscious of a secret foreboding. People were not allowed to be so happy in this world—so ran the writing on the wall. They thought of Romeo and Juliet, those most unhappy lovers, and they were uneasy.

Upon the morning of the sixth day after the greatest event in the world had befallen, Uncle Dick walked into the office, where Lancelot was sitting alone, staring absently at his drawing-board.

"Hullo!" said he.

"Hullo!" replied his uncle, and sat down heavily, and looked at his nephew with a troubled eye.

"Anything happened since I 've been away?"

"Nothing that I know of."

"You have n't heard of anything in particular, then?" asked Uncle Dick.

"No—except one thing." The prohibition did not extend to Uncle Dick, to whom one naturally told most things. "Supposing I told you I was engaged, what would you say?"

"Engaged? What should I say?" repeated Uncle Dick, with a curious look and emphasis. "Poor devil! That 's what I should say. Poor devil! Why, good God," cried Uncle Dick, "I 'm engaged myself!"

"What!" shouted his nephew. "Who to?"

"I 'll tell you presently. That 's not what I came to say," returned Uncle Dick shamefacedly; and, twisting his mustache in his fingers, he fell silent. The dark hue of his cheeks turned to clay color, and a tiny pulse began to beat perceptibly in his temple.

"What on earth 's the matter?" said Lancelot.

Uncle Dick's uneasy gaze wandered round the room, and came back to his nephew's face.

"The Consolidated 's burst up," said he.

"What do you mean?" Lancelot was conscious of an unpleasant sinking and, as it were, falling away within him.

"Burst up—smashed—broke—failed—gone up," said Uncle Dick. "We 're all in it, my boy."

Lancelot had a swift thought of Rosamund; and that sinking and falling away within him seemed to resolve itself into water.

"I don't understand," said he. "How does it happen?"

"The Southern Consolidated Investments Company—that 's what the old Amalgamated was turned into, if you remember—can't pay its debts. That 's all. And the creditors have filed a petition. That means that the directors and officials (I 'm both) will have to appear before the Registrar in the High Court. The company will be wound up; and the shareholders will lose their money. And there you have it."

"All their money? Will they all lose everything?"

"It looks like it," said Uncle Dick.

Lancelot contemplated the immediate prospect of his father's ruin, and, generally, the ruin of every one he knew, the Dean (as a director) in the Dock, and the cessation of the Cathedral restoration.

"But *you 're* all right," said Uncle Dick, noting the expression of his nephew's face. "There 's your mother's money coming to you."

"That will do for the governor, any way," said Lancelot. "Have you told him yet?"

"No," said Uncle Dick. "But I must. I came straight here from the station."

"We 'd better go and get it over," said Lancelot.

They went out into the street, and through the echoing dimness of the Cathedral, and down the sunny flight of steps to Saint Catherine's Gate; and the familiar sights and sounds were as a flight of arrows in Lancelot's heart.

"Hullo, Dick, you here! Why did n't you telegraph? Then I could have arranged about lunch. Lance, run into the kitchen and see about it," said the Reverend Charles.

Lancelot was glad enough to go. He remembered, as he crossed the stone-paved hall, how he had gone to the kitchen on the same errand, on the night of Uncle Dick's arrival, years and years ago. When he returned to the study, Uncle Dick was looking out of the window, and the Reverend Charles was leaning his little elbows on the mantel-piece, his face buried in his hands. He looked up and turned round as Lancelot closed the door.

"Well, Lance," said the kind little man, "don't look so miserable, my boy. Your uncle brings bad news, but I tell him we must hope for the best. Things may not be as bad as they seem—they never are, you know. And it 's ill talking between a full man and a fasting—so we 'll just make a proper meal before we say any more about it."

If Lancelot had never admired his easy-going parent before, he admired him in that moment. The little parson's simple courage put heart into them all, so that even Uncle Dick was a little cheered.

"Did you see anything of Dolly Glossop while you were in town, Dick?" asked the Reverend Charles, when they were seated at lunch. "She's in Saint Barnabas's Hospital, you know," he kindly explained.

"Yes, I know. Oh, yes, I saw her. In fact, I——" Uncle Dick looked up, met his nephew's inquiring gaze, and stopped for a moment. "I saw her—in point of fact—several times," he added.

"Can this thing be?" thought Lancelot.

"And how does she like her new occupation—her new fad, one might almost say?" pursued the Reverend Charles amiably.

"She talked of giving it up before very long," replied Uncle Dick. "But now—I don't know whether she'll be able to—what?"

"I suppose Canon Glossop is—er—involved?" hinted the clergyman.

"Up to two thousand five hundred or so, I believe," said Mr. Thornhaigh.

"Two thousand five hundred? That's an odd coincidence? Are you sure you are right, Dick?"

"What do you mean?"

"That's the very sum—within a hundred or so—that Glossop is to hand over to Lancelot in a few months. Glossop's co-trustee with Bland for his mother's money."

The three looked upon one another.

"It can't be," said the clergyman.

"It can, though," said Uncle Dick. "Look here, we'll go and see Glossop this very afternoon—all of us—what?"

They had little mind to linger over their meal; and presently they were standing in the broad afternoon sun, outside the nail-studded door of the canonical residence. Lancelot felt as though he were moving in a disordered dream. Here, in the dizzying sunshine, under the sense of imminent calamity, were his father and his uncle and himself, brought there by a sudden impulse; and behind that forbidding door, there lay in ambush—what?

A servant with a harsh and pockmarked countenance, opening the door, said doubtfully that Canon Glossop was in, as though she would have denied it if she could; and stood upon the threshold looking sourly at the visitors.

The Reverend Charles politely requested an audience.

"I'll see if the Canon is disengaged," said the maid unwillingly; and she would have closed the door, had not Uncle Dick already insinuated his leg into the opening.

"Come along," said he, as the maid disappeared up the staircase. "I'm going up."

"Certainly not"—the Canon's angry tones sounded from above. "You know perfectly well I never see any one at this hour. Give Mr. Crane my compliments, and——"

"Good morning, Canon," said Uncle Dick, walking into the study. "I wanted to see you about a little business, and ventured to come up."

The clergyman's tall, stooping figure loomed indistinctly black upon the sunlight which streamed in dusty rays through the window, striking here and there upon the litter of open letters, newspapers, and piles of books which filled that disorderly apartment. Lancelot's professional eye noted that the ceiling was grimy and discolored, that cobwebs festooned the corners, and that the sash-line of the window hung in a broken strand.

Canon Glossop greeted his visitors without any show of surprise, and slowly and gropingly transferred to floor and table the miscellaneous heaps of rubbish which encumbered the chairs, like a man but half-awake.

"The fact is," began Uncle Dick briskly, "I came to offer my services—as I am going to town in a day or two—in case I might be of service to you in the matter of the transference of the trust moneys under the terms of the late Mrs. Crane's marriage settlement, as to which my brother-in-law here tells me he has written you."

The Canon appeared to meditate upon this suggestion.

"You are very good," he said, "but I do not think I need trouble you." Again he appeared to meditate, frowning at the carpet. "I presume," he went on, "that a formal transference of the securities now standing in my name will be sufficient?"

"Depends on the securities," said Uncle Dick, before the Reverend Charles could speak.

"You should be a judge of that," said the Canon. And the Reverend Charles was immediately conscious of a painful pressure upon his right foot. Perceiving Uncle Dick's retreating boot, he recognized that his part was to maintain silence.

"The Consolidated was all right at one time," remarked Uncle Dick composedly. "I did n't know it was a proper investment for trust-money," he added.

"That, I take it, is, after all, a matter for the trustee to decide, Mr. Thornhaigh," said the Canon, with a sort of heavy pomposity, raising his glance to Mr. Thornhaigh's face for the first time; and Uncle Dick noted the curious, glassy shine in the little green eyes. The Reverend Charles, who was mopping his forehead with a green silk handkerchief, paused in the act. Lancelot sat very still. "Mr. Bland, my co-trustee, having long ago tacitly relinquished his responsibility to me, I acted as I thought best."

"Of course," said Uncle Dick. "And you invested the whole amount in the Southern Consolidated?"

"Precisely," said the Canon.

Uncle Dick, rising abruptly, stood in front of the Reverend Charles, and backed towards the door, so that the clergyman found himself involved in a retreat before he could open his mouth.

"He's admitted the fact before witnesses," said Uncle Dick, when the trio found themselves outside again in the dizzying glare of sunshine. "Now, has that scoundrel any private means?"

"I believe he has," said the Reverend Charles tremulously.

"Well, well! And that other condemned fool—what's his God-forsaken name—Bland? Has Bland any pieces?"

"I don't know," said the clergyman. He was shivering with misery and excitement. "Let us come home, Dick, and we can talk it over—talk it over."

Along the hot streets, through the great cool sepulchre of the Cathedral, down the steps and along the causeway to Saint Catherine's Gate, Lancelot followed, sick and silent. The sunshine annoyed him acutely. He wished the rain would fall and the wind blow; and then he was visited by an unreasonable fear lest they should meet Rosamund.

"I must think this thing out," said Uncle Dick, as they entered the house; and he disappeared.

"And I must go to the office," said Lance. He took his father's delicate, shaking hand in his hard fingers. "Cheer up, Daddy," said he. "Have a smoke and a lie-down, and you'll see we'll pull through somehow. I don't want the money, except that you could have had it. Now I must earn it, that's all."

"God bless you, my boy!" said the little clergyman, with unwonted emotion.

Out again in the remorseless sunlight, with that singular dread of meeting his betrothed strong upon him, Lancelot walked to the office, looking disaster steadily in the face. He found a pencil note from Mr. Inkpen awaiting him. The old man wrote that he was confined to bed with a severe chill, adding a string of minute instructions.

"What next?" said Lancelot. "It's coming upon us—coming upon us, as I always knew it would. The luck's turned at last." He stood quite still for three or four minutes, absorbed in thought that was partly prayer. His dead mother had bequeathed to this singular youth something else besides money. Then he turned to his work, and found to his surprise that he could work easily.

After dinner, when the candles gleamed on the silver and the white napery, Uncle Dick broke his cryptic silence.

"The way I take it," said he judicially, "is like this—and a devilish unpleasant way it is. We're all in Queer Street, and high up; and I know very well you think it's my fault. Well, and so it is, but I could n't help it. . . . There's no use talking about that. The question is,

what to do? Now, first, as to the trustee business. Glossop is a fraudulent trustee under the Act, and so is Bland. They must have known that the Company was an illegal investment, and if they did n't it 's all the same. Very well. They must pay up. If it strips 'em bare, they must pay up, every last cent."

"But supposing they can't?" interposed the Reverend Charles.

"Then they 'll go to prison," answered the man of affairs. "But the worst of it is," he added, "that besotted scamp will stand in the position of my father-in-law!" He stared defiantly at the audience, with raised eyebrows. There was an astonished pause.

"Oh," said Lance. "It 's Dolly!"

"Do I understand you——" began the Reverend Charles, completely bewildered.

"We 'll drink her health," said Uncle Dick a little wildly. "*Fiat justitia.* . . . You see, I 'll not spare her father. He balked me once—I might have married Eleanor Warrilow—by God, I might! She liked me well enough—but Glossop sent her to —— for orders. Now I 'll marry his daughter, God bless her, in spite of his teeth! Unless she gives me up—I 'll give her the choice, as a person ought. But she 's stanch, is Dolly—she 'll stick by me, sink or swim."

"But you don't mean to say——" the clergyman began again.

"Pass!" said Uncle Dick. "I 'll tell you all about it presently. Now, who 's the girl of your heart, Lancelot? Who 's your fancy, my winsome boy?

"By the way," he continued before Lance could reply, "the Dean will join the Canon—over the oakum. The Dean 's heavily dipped—the Very Reverend is a Director, so he is! Come, Tyke, give us a toast before we get to business!"

The two elder men looked expectantly at Lancelot; the Reverend Charles with an indulgent smile, Uncle Dick with preternatural solemnity.

"The Dean," Lancelot began, "will stand in the position of——"

Uncle Dick beat upon the table with shouts. "It 's not the ringlets—not the corkscrew curls—say it is n't the curl-paper daughter with the barnacles. Oh, say it is n't, on your bended knees!"

Lancelot waited, glass in hand, until his uncle had done.

"Father and Uncle, will you drink the health of Rosamund?" said he.

They clinked glasses, and drank, and shook hands. Lancelot saw a gathering doubt in his father's eye. "I 'll tell you all about it presently, Daddy," said he.

"Pass!" cried his uncle. "And now to business—for to-morrow I go back to town. This place is n't healthy just now for the poor Colonial."

They talked far into the night; but, talk as they might, disaster still

stared them in the face. When his father went to his room, Lancelot followed him.

"I should like to tell you," said he, "that I really meant that about—about Rosamund. I was going to tell you, any way."

"My dear boy," said the Reverend Charles, with great kindness, "I only wish it had happened at some other time."

"What ought I to do?"

"I had rather you made up your mind by yourself," said the clergyman. "Then come to me if you like—you know how glad I am you should do so. Morning brings counsel—and so, good-night, my son."

Lancelot lay long awake. He hearkened to the bells chiming the hours, the night wind breathing in the leaves without, and the voice of the river as it rose upon the silence; and all his heart turned to Rosamund with a bitter and passionate desire.

CHAPTER XVII

LANCELOT confronted the morning sunshine with the dismal conviction that it was his duty to renounce all his pretensions to Rosamund, quite irrespective of the lady's own wishes. "'I must be cruel to be kind,'" he murmured to the tragic image of resolution in the looking-glass, with its hair ruffled over its eyes. He confided his resolve to his father.

"I think you are right," said the little clergyman. "I think you're quite right. And the time of trial," he added, with pious cheerfulness, "will be good for both of you. If you are really fond of each other—as I've no doubt you are—the test will but cement the bonds of your affection. And if you are only under the influence of a passing fancy—why, the sooner you find it out, the better. Why, bless my soul!" cried the little clergyman, "I was in and out of love a dozen times before I found your dear mother, my boy."

"Poor Maria would have a word to say to me, just now, I expect," put in Uncle Dick, who entered the room at this moment, with his tall hat tilted over one eye. "Well, well, she was right, after all. Dick's the Family Curse. Down with Dick! Exile him—cut him off with a shilling—away with the prodigal! And quite right too."

"I wish you wouldn't talk so wildly, Dick," said the Reverend Charles. "You know I think none the worse of you for what's happened. It's destiny—the act of God, like the thunder-storms."

"'There came a blooming thunder-storm and washed the beggars out'—what? Well, good-by. I'm going to investigate the wreck of the Hesperus."

So Uncle Dick departed for London once more; and Lancelot went to his office treadmill. Mr. Inkpen was no better, but rather worse, and

Lancelot had his hands full. As he worked, he made up his mind that he would not go to see Rosamund until the news of the failure of the Southern Consolidated Investments Company was published abroad; for if he saw her he must infallibly explain the position of affairs; and since (he argued) no woman could keep a secret, the matter would then become known. But Uncle Dick had enjoined secrecy; doubtless he had his own reasons for so doing, and Lancelot felt bound to respect them. His plan of heroical avoidance had only one flaw; but that one was to prove fatal. For, with the sublime egoism of youth, he forgot to take account of the other party involved in the scheme.

Meanwhile, Lancelot had plenty of work which might profitably be performed instead of philandering in the Deanery garden. There were letters to write, specifications to draft, foremen to instruct, details to design, and more than one survey to make about the Cathedral. The restoration of the fabric was steadily progressing; and the work required perpetual supervision and a continual attention to minute details. To-day, the great northeast buttress which contained the hermit's cell had to be measured and surveyed; and thither, in the late afternoon, Lancelot carried sketch-book and two-foot rule.

A summer gale had sprung up during the day, turning all things lead-color, whirling the dust about the gloomy streets, and tearing the leaves from the trees. Lancelot, as he worked in the cell, heard the storm crying among the pinnacles and battlements overhead; and he recalled that other day of wind, months ago, when Dorothy had come to tell him of her departure. He had an impression, then, that he had set his affections upon her; or, at least, that he might do so. Now, when he knew that Uncle Dick had unaccountably claimed her, he was scarcely moved beyond an amused interest in the consideration of his grizzled uncle taking to himself that flighty little girl; and a distinct feeling of relief upon his own account; for there had been times when his conscience (that ignorant voice) told him that perchance he had troubled Dorothy's peace of mind. Meditating on these things, he stooped to examine the mason's marks upon the stone in the wall of the cell, which he had pointed out to Dorothy. She had scorned to look at these relics, he remembered. Not so Rosamund, he thought, were she here; and immediately there came upon him that strange sense of having lived that moment before, and of certainly knowing what would happen next, which comes to most people at times. "A step . . ." he said. He stood upright, and through the melancholy bluster of the wind there fell the light sound of a step scraping the stone stair. "And what next? . . . Oh, Rosamund, of course," said Lancelot; and she stood in the doorway, most radiant to his vision and beautiful beyond compare.

"Lancelot, why have n't you been to see me?" Rosamund directly and positively demanded.

"I had n't time—really, you don't know what a drive I 've been in," began Lancelot. "Mr. Inkpen 's ill, and I——"

"Oh," said Rosamund, graciously accepting the excuse. "Well, you 're coming to-night, of course."

"I 'm afraid I can't, really," said the wretched youth, with every signal of confusion. "I 'm frightfully busy."

"Nonsense!" said Rosamund, quite unimpressed. "You can spare an hour or two. You 'll work all the better afterwards."

Lancelot began to frame broken excuses. Rosamund regarded him steadily.

"Tell me the real reason. I insist," said she.

"Well, the fact is, I think it 's better we—we should n't—I mean, I ought not to spend so much time——"

"So you just made up your mind you 'd leave off coming to see me, without a word," said Rosamund. "I think you 're horrid. I never thought you 'd be so unkind—and it 's so unnecessary, too."

Lancelot, deeply hurt, began to feel irritated.

"I think you might let me try and do what I think is best for us both," said he. "Won't you take my word for it that I have good reasons, which I can't tell you? Do please take my word. Will you?" he added imploringly; and perhaps no form of speech he could have chosen would have defeated his own object so completely.

"No, I won't," returned Rosamund promptly. "I don't see why I should. We 're doing nothing wrong. Come, Lancelot, who 's been talking to you? I shan't go away till you tell me everything. I 've a right to know—have n't I, now?"

Hunted into a corner, and a good deal afraid of his dear huntress, Lancelot considered this point for the first time; and it seemed to him that there was reason in her words. After all, he had never promised Uncle Dick to keep secrets from his betrothed. Uncle Dick would tell Dorothy fast enough, he thought; and at that, the last strand of resolution parted; and he plunged into a history of the whole matter. He wondered in what manner Rosamund would receive the disastrous news; and he was astonished at her composure.

"Is that all?" she asked.

"Well, I should think so," said Lancelot.

"I mean, there 's nothing more behind everything? It 's just a lot of money lost, and that 's all?"

"That 's all," repeated Lancelot, with sarcastic emphasis.

"And for that you were going to give me up?" said Rosamund. "You silly boy!" She put her arms about his neck, and the world and all its concerns dropped away from Lancelot like the phantoms of a dream; and for a little while their conversation concerned themselves alone. Then Lancelot took her home.

"You 'll go on coming just as you always do," said she. "Then the news will arrive, and I dare say they will forbid you to come, or they 'll send me away, perhaps. Well, then we 'll just have to wait till things are better."

"But they don't know we 're engaged, therefore why should they turn me out?" Lancelot objected.

"Of course they know. Do you suppose they would have allowed you to come as they have if they did n't like you? It 's all their doing, and I shall tell them so," said Rosamund; and so they parted.

Lancelot went back through the windy dark with a candle lighted and burning in his heart with a pure and serene radiance. He saw his inheritance lost, his father ruined, wide disaster threatening the old city where he was born and bred, and the fulfilment of his heart's desire suddenly removed far off from him; he regarded all these things, in that hour, with a mind untroubled; for a single joy possessed him wholly.

Lancelot had his survey to finish; and that night a flickering gleam shone from the narrow window of the anchorite's cell, until the chimes rang two in the morning. The stone engraven with the curious mark being loose, Lancelot, in order to investigate the inner condition of the wall, fetched pick and chisel and prized it from its place. Facing him, at the back of the square hole left by the removal of the block, was the mark again, cut somewhat more distinctly. Lancelot made out a crown and key, graven in outline; the crown horizontal, with three points, the key vertical as it were standing within the crown, with a simple notched oblong for the wards. The sign struck Lancelot, in his state of exaltation, as coincidently symbolic. "Crown and key is what I 've gained," said he. "I want no other crown than hers; and I have a key that fits the lock of the world." He was pleased with the conceit, and began loosening the stones in the square hole. The joints were fitted without mortar, and presently he had a recess big enough to hold his head and shoulders. And there, cut on a stone that faced upwards this time, was the crown and key again. Lancelot began to feel a little excited. He would trace out the handiwork of this old mason who had built his wall without mortar; and he continued to ply pick and chisel until he had excavated the mouth of a tunnel which had a slight downward slope. All the stones were laid without mortar, but he noted that where they came away from the body of the stonework the fine joints they revealed were closely mortared. The loose stones fitted and bonded in like a puzzle; and always, as he pulled away stone after stone, the strange mark of the crown and key was uncovered; and always the succession of marks trended slightly downwards. Lancelot was well into the heart of the buttress, where the mass of stonework flanged on to the main wall of the choir aisle, when the last of his candles gave out and forced him to retreat.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE next morning, Lancelot went to report himself to Mr. Inkpen, who was still kept prisoner by his illness. He found the old man propped up in bed, his spectacles half-way down his nose, surrounded by a litter of manuscript papers, parchments, and old brown volumes of county history.

"I have been devoting my enforced retirement," said Mr. Inkpen, with a kind of snarl at the words, and eying his pupil sideways, "to working upon my monograph on the Cathedral. We must labor, young sir, while there are yet twelve hours in the day wherein men ought to work. I have been enabled to discover a curious fact about Abbot Stephen Hagberg that the Dean 's so fond of. I find my theory that he must have amassed considerable wealth curiously confirmed, if we only take into consideration the fact that he sold the Abbey corn at famine prices to the starving townspeople, in a time of scarcity—a monstrous piece of business altogether. The legend has it," said Mr. Inkpen, shutting his eyes and shaking his head, as though to disclaim all responsibility for such things—"the legend will have it that he was supernaturally visited by a plague of snakes and scorpions, which ate up and devoured hoarded grain faster than he could sell it—but even so, he must have made a perfect fortune. Now we have documentary evidence that he never paid his workmen for completing the towers. I have always disagreed with the Dean upon the character of Abbot Hagberg—the Dean thinks him a good man. I think he was a very bad one. Eh?" said Mr. Inkpen sharply, opening his eyes very wide.

"I should think so," said Lancelot, anxious to change the subject. "Have you found out any more about the eastern buttress?" and he told Mr. Inkpen of his discovery of the marked stones fitted without mortar.

"Simple carelessness," said the old man. "Nothing else in the world. I 've found the same thing constantly, in old work. Trace out that man's work, and you 'll come upon rubbish, and bits of wood, and garden mould, very likely—anything would do for a mediæval mason, when he was a shirker. You know the history of the last occupant of the buttress-cell? No? Good gracious me! How 's that? Here—read it, read it."

He took up an old ragged book from among the miscellany of volumes about him, and turned over the leaves.

"You know there 's no communion plate in the place older than the sixteenth century, of course?" the old man went on, perfectly contented in having secured a hearer who had perforce to listen to him. "Well, the reason is, because the original vessels were stolen in the Scotch foray of 1318—which happened, you see, about a century after Abbot Stephen

Hagberg's time. Robert Bruce led the Scots, and he made a clean job of it—sacked the Cathedral, robbed it of everything portable, and burned the town. Then the Scots went on their murdering way, leaving one of their number, who was wounded, behind them. He was made prisoner by the Abbot of the time, who confined him within the Gyrth boundaries —of course you know what that means?" The old man stared severely at his pupil.

"Limits of the rights of Sanctuary," answered Lancelot promptly.

"Within limits of the rights of Sanctuary, so that the Scotch prisoner was, to all intents and purposes, a Gyrthman. He was relegated to the great buttress for his sleeping room; in the day he would be employed in the Cathedral, 'to be reddy,'" Mr. Inkpen began to read from his book, "'at the dirige, and the messe at such time as it is done at the warnyng of the belman of the towne and do your dewte in ryngyng,' and so on. So the Dean's hypothesis of an anchorite may be said to be exploded—utterly exploded."

Lancelot, not unnaturally, inquired why the Scot made no attempt to escape.

"How do I know? He was well enough off where he was, I suppose. No Scotchman that I ever heard of ever went back to Scotland if he could live anywhere else," retorted Mr. Inkpen. "The records say he expired suddenly, in the crypt, of some kind of falling sickness. He was the last inhabitant of the buttress, by all accounts."

Lancelot's heart smote him as he hearkened to the old man babbling contentedly on, and thought of the blow which must presently fall upon his white head. Much more than the total loss of all his savings, which he had invested in the Consolidated, would the enforced cessation of the restoration work about the Cathedral oppress the veteran. For the cost of the operations was defrayed entirely by private munificence; and now no one would have any more money. It was even doubtful whether the authorities would be able to meet the liabilities already incurred.

Lancelot went to examine his work of the night before. The chisel might or might not have been where he had placed it—he could not be certain. As he picked it up, his eye lighted upon a small, round, gray object lying among the loose stones. He rubbed it on his coat-sleeve, and lo! it was a silver button. "The Scotch prisoner!" said Lancelot, staring upon it. "Now, did he build this wall, and did he brand his stones with the crown and key? That would explain why the mark differs from all other marks. Perhaps they set him to repair the place after his friends had knocked it about."

He stood for a long time, the button in his hand, all sorts of fancies shaping themselves in his brain. The imagination of youth will weave a whole history out of cobwebs and moonshine, in one moment of time. Lancelot saw that dead Scotch prisoner visibly before him. He was a

long, bony, dark man, round-shouldered, with lively gray eyes, high cheek-bones, and his cheeks hollow above a ragged fringe of beard; and the blue cloak about his shoulders was fastened at the throat with a silver button. He limped heavily from his wound; that was why he could not escape. "But what," said Lancelot, "was his little game, with his mason's marks, and the loose stones?"

Since he might not use his master's time to prosecute an enterprise of private curiosity, Lancelot rose at dawn the next morning and went up to the cell in the buttress, through the golden and profound quietude of the summer morning, shot through by the call and twitter of the birds.

In the earthy damp and grayness of the cell, Lancelot took mason's hammer and chisel in hand, and struck upon the stonework at the back of the excavation. The sound rang hollow; he dislodged a stone, and put his hand through the hole into empty space. After removing more blocks, a narrow tunnel gaped at the explorer. There was barely room enough for Lancelot to drag himself forward on his stomach; but he worked his way in head first, for some three or four yards; when he touched a solid wall. With a good deal of difficulty, he rummaged a candle end and matches from his pocket, lit the candle, and passed it over the face of the stonework. Sure enough, there was the crown and key, cut right in the centre of the irregular circle of squared stones. Lancelot reckoned that he had come to the wall of the choir aisle. But here the stones were mortared together. Dragging himself out backwards, Lancelot descended the stair and made certain measurements outside the buttress, which confirmed his theory. There was scant room to wield hammer and chisel in the tunnel; so he went into the Cathedral, with the intention of breaking through the wall from that side; but when he took his bearings he found that the tunnel communicated with the inner wall at a spot above the groined vaulting of the aisle. Since there was no access to the space between the upper side of the vaulting and the lead roof, there was nothing for it but to return to his tunnel. So Lancelot burrowed once more; and lying on his back like a miner, with a candle stuck by his side, he drove at the wall with hammer and chisel. Partially suffocated, wet through in the close heat, choked with the fine dust that flew from the chisel, after near an hour's toil he dislodged a stone that fell outwards upon the top of the vaulting. The next stone was more easily dislodged; and before long there was a ragged opening through which Lancelot forced himself. He was now on the upper side of the vaulting which roofed the choir aisle; but instead of a large, triangular roof-space, extending from the top of the vaulting to the under-side of the rafters which carried the lead roof, in which Lancelot had expected to find himself, he had to lie prone beneath what seemed to be a level floor of stone. He turned on his back and held the candle to the flat stone above him, and there again was the mark of the crown and key.

The stone rang hollow to the stroke of the hammer; and Lancelot, crouching on his knees, heaved upwards with all his might. But the stone was fixed as fate. Again he heaved, and the stone yielded a very little.

Lancelot put his whole strength into another effort, and the stone rose on his shoulders. But the weight was intolerable, and he had to let the stone drop into its place again. For a while the explorer lay on his face, panting and sweating. "A screw-jack," said he. "Breakfast first, then a screw-jack, and the office may go hang."

Covered with dirt and dust, his face seamed with little rivulets, where the perspiration had trickled down, his knuckles bleeding, Lancelot emerged blinking into the light of day. The magic quality was gone from the air, the stir of life rose all about him, smoke ascended from the house chimneys against the blue, and Lancelot went down to breakfast in the broad and common sunshine of workaday life.

After breakfast, he had a small screw-jack carried into the cell by one of his workmen, and started anew. He got the jack through the tunnel, and into position; turned upon the levers, and hoisted away the big stone. It fell back with a loud echo; and Lancelot, candle in hand, climbed through the opening. He found himself in a long, low chamber with a barrel roof of brick or stone, and a level floor of stone flags. Beneath his feet was the choir aisle; above the barrel vaulting, the battlemented roof of lead. The eastern end of the chamber was raised by a low step running across the whole width, and against the eastern wall stood a plain stone altar. The chamber was absolutely bare. Above the altar, the foliated stone jambs and mullions of a small window, which had been built up, showed against the coursed masonry. Lancelot had stumbled unawares into a disused chantry; and he remembered how, in the history of the Cathedral, it was related that, in the latter half of the fourteenth century, there were in the Minster several chantry chapels, where tapers burned continually, and priests never ceased to offer masses for the quick and the dead. The stairway leading to the chantry from the aisle below must long ago have been destroyed, and all means of communication blocked up. In the corner, at the end opposite the altar, Lancelot's trained observation took note of the square opening in the floor, where the stairs once landed, and where now the rough upper side of the vaulted ceiling to the choir aisle showed a little below the floor level. He held his candle on high, in the middle of the chantry, and looked about him. The flame burned steadily in the hot and musty air, making a little dome of uncertain light, closed in with murky shadow. The place was very still. High above him, Lancelot heard the bells chiming to matins, one, *two,* one, *two,* in the minor.

The sign of the crown and key had led him so far; would it lead him farther yet? Lancelot quested round the chapel, searching every stone in the floor and in the wall high as he could see. To and fro he went for

a long time; and at last, with a thrill of excitement, he found the sign cut upon a flagstone, one edge of which was bedded against the outer wall, upon the same side as that upon which Lancelot had entered, and at a point about the middle of its length. Lancelot fell to work with hammer and chisel, and levered up the stone. The curve of the vaulting beneath dipped to the wall; and in the wall itself appeared an oblong opening. The candle revealed a narrow staircase of stone descending at a sharp angle in the thickness of the wall. Lancelot let himself into the opening, feet first, and cautiously descended. So sharp was the incline, and so narrow the shaft, that, lying with his chest on the edge of the steps, with his back scraping the wall above, he had but just room to bend his knees. Down and still down he climbed, expecting every moment to step off into a deep hole, until he calculated he must have descended to a point below the floor of the crypt. At last he grounded upon solid stone; and, feeling with his feet, he could discover neither crevice nor opening. There was nothing for it but to return. When Lancelot reached the chantrey again, he took a series of measurements; then he returned through his tunnel to the outside of the Cathedral, and marked a corresponding series on the face of the outer wall of the choir aisle. Going within, he traced the course of the stair on the inner wall. He found that the shaft passed immediately beneath the crack in the wall-arcading, which, he remembered, the Dean had pointed out to Uncle Dick, years and years ago. Then he traced the course of the stair into the crypt. By this time it was late in the afternoon, and the explorer was very hungry and very tired. Having marked a spot in the crypt, he set two men to excavate a hole in the earthen floor to a certain depth, and went home to get some food, in a state of vague expectation and excitement. What he expected to find, he did not know; he did not even formulate the question to himself. He was wholly bent upon searching out the secret of the crown and key.

CHAPTER XIX

It was dark when Lancelot returned to the Cathedral. The doors being closed, he let himself in at the door of the south transept and went directly to the crypt. He jumped into the waist-deep pit his men had digged, and, stripped to his vest, he set to work by the light of two candles, to break through the wall, at the point where the stairway in the wall, by all calculation, should end.

The ringing of iron upon stone echoed in the vast chamber like the blows of a giant, as Lancelot plied mallet and chisel upon the hard mortar joints. An hour went by in strenuous toil, and Lancelot had not dislodged a single block. He sat down and mopped his face and neck, and stared at the blackness which closed him in on every side. Listening,

half-consciously, for the slightest sound to break the profound stillness, he caught the faint echo of a footstep somewhere in the huge bulk of building above him. Lancelot, as he thought, had locked the transept door behind him. It was possible, but very unlikely, that old Pottel, who kept the keys, would return at this hour; and, a good deal startled, Lancelot strained his ears to listen. For a few moments there was dead silence; and then there fell the unmistakable sound of footsteps crossing the nave. It occurred to Lancelot, with a disagreeable shock, that his duty was to go and meet that intruder; and at the same moment he thought of the Scotch captive in the cell, the owner of the silver button, dead so long ago. Overcoming a strong reluctance to making any sort of movement, however slight, he took up a crow-bar, and stood upright. The footsteps rang louder—drew nearer—a yellow shaft of light shone at the head of the stair leading down into the crypt—and descended the stair, to the accompanying beat of footsteps. A voice cried his name, and Lancelot experienced a spasm of relief which surprised himself. He answered, the light came swiftly forward, and the face of Uncle Dick appeared out of the shadow behind a bull's-eye lantern.

"Uncle Dick! How did you get in?"

"Through the door, same as you. You 're a fine chap to take charge of the House of God! I might have looted the whole place—what?"

"I thought you were in London."

"So I was—but I 'm here now. Came up with a bit of news for you, my boy. They told me you were over here, so I collared a lantern and came. What in the name of goodness are you playing at? Trying to bury yourself in despair? I advise wait till you 've heard what I 've got to say first."

Uncle Dick, whose manner betrayed some excitement, turned his light on every side to see if there were any solid object to sit upon, and, finding none, sat down on the ground. Lancelot sat on the edge of his pit, and kicked his heels.

"Who do you think I travelled up to town with, t' other day," Uncle Dick resumed. "No less a person than your fraudulent trustee, sir, the Reverend Canon Glossop. I saw him at the station, and I says to myself, says I, 'Your guilty conscience, my reverend sir, is taking you up to town to find out if there 's anything wrong with the Consolidated, after what I let drop to you.' So I did a little thinking till we got to the next station, and then I changed into his compartment, and we dropped into an affable conversation. I led him to talk about the trust-money business, and by what he said, I really don't believe he knew he was doing wrong in putting your money in. So I made believe to sympathize—talked of grandmotherly legislation, which would n't let good trustees do what they thought best, and so on; and when we got to town, I gave him dinner —sumptuous victual and choice liquor. Then I talked to him about how

he had committed a criminal offense, how, if it came to the Bishop's ears, he 'd unfrock him, and how he stood on the verge of ruin generally, until he got real frightened; and then I made a little proposition. I said I wanted to help him and keep matters smooth, for the sake of all parties; and why shouldn 't he leave the two thousand five hundred where it was—in the Consolidated—since it was such a rattling investment, give an order to his broker to sell out other securities to the same amount, and hand us the check?"

Uncle Dick paused expectantly.

"But he would lose the lot if he did that," said Lancelot.

"Sharp boy!" said Uncle Dick. "He would. In fact, he has. The suggestion was pure spec. on my part, for I did n't know whether he had any money of his own or not. But he had—then. He has n't now. And I stayed at the same hotel with the beggar—kindly consented to go with him to interview his broker—steered the whole business through, cashed the check the next day, and paid it into your father's account. I call that good business—what?"

Lancelot found himself shaking hands with his delighted uncle while he was trying to find words to express his emotions. Then he applied his mind to comprehend the situation in detail.

"Then you did n't tell him the Consolidated was smashed?"

"No, sir," said Uncle Dick. "I did not."

"I suppose he would n't have signed the check if you had?"

"He would have made it out to self and bolted with the lot," returned the man of many wiles. "What else could he do? As it was, he was paying for more things than one, with that little piece of paper. He did n't know it—but he will!"

"What will he know?" Lancelot asked.

"I might have married Eleanor Warrilow, if it had n't been for that reverend impostor. And now where is she? Buried alive, poor girl."

"But you 're going to marry Dorothy," said Lancelot.

"That 's not the point. Besides, she won't have me till this trouble 's blown over," Uncle Dick answered gloomily. "She says it 's my fault—she says I should have known what was going on, and all that—and she says I 've got to get things right again. How the deuce am I to do that, I ask you?"

"Well, you seem to have begun all right," said Lancelot.

"I can't do any more," returned his uncle. "We 're ruined, my boy, and no mistake. Now let 's go home."

"I 've got my work to finish first;" and Lancelot, fearful of questions, explained that he must investigate the interior of the wall, which had settled upon its foundations.

"Must you do it yourself? And won't to-morrow do?" inquired his uncle. "You 're a curious boy. I like to sleep at nights, myself. Here,

give me the pick for a spell. I used to be able to handle a pick at one time;" and Uncle Dick took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, jumped into the pit, and, spitting on his hands, went to work like one who knew his job. Lancelot stood watching the miner, not without misgivings. He wanted to achieve the quest himself; but, at the same time, under the impulse of gratitude to his uncle, he had a strong inclination to confide in him.

Presently Uncle Dick stood up, panting. "Why am I doing this?" said he. "It 's no manner of use. Three days would n't see you through this masonry. Why don't you set a gang of navvies on the job?"

"I 'll tell you why," said Lancelot, coming to a sudden resolution; and incontinently he told how he had followed the sign upon the stone.

"And what do you expect to find?" inquired his uncle. "Skeletons? What 's the market price of bones?"

"I don't expect anything," said Lancelot, who had long known that his uncle lacked imagination.

"You 're right there," said Uncle Dick. "Now I vote we go home to bed. The Cathedral won't run away in the night. Come along."

Lancelot slept late next morning; and when he arose he found a pencil note upon his dressing-table, signed his affectionate uncle, R. T.

> I thought you 'd like to know that as I could n't sleep last night, I got up and had another turn at the wall, and broke through a thin place into a big hole. There is nothing in it, not even a bone. I have to catch the early train to town, so good-by. I put the keys where I found them. By the way, you need n't mention my name when you report the matter. Inkpots might think I was interfering.

There was nothing in it, then. Remained only to report to Mr. Inkpen the empty discoveries of an old chantry and a vacant tomb. Sure enough, these would please the old man mightily. Lancelot visited the crypt on his way to the office. There was a ragged opening, leading into an empty chamber of hewn stone, some eight feet long by five feet high and three feet broad. The sepulchre was quite empty.

So Lancelot went to his master and made his report, duly omitting, as unessential, all mention of Uncle Dick's part in the matter. Mr. Inkpen sent him to the Dean; and that very reverend antiquary rushed over to the Cathedral, crawled through the tunnel, explored the chantry, slid down the stair into the chamber in the wall, and emerged, all tattered, covered with dust, and in a high state of glorification.

It took him a few days to elaborate a theory; then he brought forth a beautiful legend, complete at all points—save one.

"It came upon me," the Dean used to say, expatiating to an admiring audience, "all in a moment. Mr. Inkpen was right, and I was wrong. The cell *was* utilized as a prison; the prisoner, a certain wounded Scot of whom we read, left behind from the Bruce's terrible raid in 1318.

Now, the raid took place not quite a century after the death of our old friend, Abbot Hagberg. What does that suggest? Plainly, that the Scots were not merely attracted by the natural instinct of murder and foray, but by the rumors of the Abbot's concealed treasure, amassed during a laboriously penurious lifetime, by fair means and foul—fair means *and* foul. Let us admit it and pass on. They sacked the Minster, but they never found the treasure. Perchance it was hid in the very place!" Here the Dean, with a dramatic gesture, would indicate the cavern in the wall. "Turn we, then, to the prisoner. Confined more or less rigidly to his buttress, he sets himself to seek the treasure. He cuts his private mark upon the stones as he goes, so that, if he fails himself, another, coming after him, may succeed. Perhaps—who knows?—he was in direct communication with Robert Bruce. We have but the record of his sudden death to guide us—and the empty chamber. Whether, upon my hypothesis, he succeeded in stealing the treasure, we shall never know."

And yet there were just two persons in the world who could have enlightened the Dean upon this point. But they never did.

CHAPTER XX

When Uncle Dick said in his note to his nephew that he could not sleep, that he had returned to the Cathedral and had there broken through the wall, presumably for the sake of amusement, his statement was, so far, within the truth. Lancelot thought his uncle destitute of imagination; but he was wrong. In certain directions, Mr. Thornhaigh was gifted with imagination of a high order; and his nephew's story of the quest of the crown and key made a strong appeal to it. He was careful to hide his interest from Lancelot. And when his nephew had gone sound asleep after his labors, it occurred to his uncle that the fruit of those labors, if indeed there were any (and stranger things had been), had better fall to the share of Uncle Dick. The venture was, at least, worth attempting; any venture would be, in the ruined state of his fortunes; and Uncle Dick arose and dressed, and did as he had said in his letter.

"There is nothing in it, not even a bone"—thus he had written to his confiding nephew. Nor was there when Mr. Thornhaigh quitted the Cathedral. But when he broke through the wall he broke into a chamber wherein there were five small iron coffers full of coins, both silver and gold; an oaken chest filled with priests' vestments, rotten as tinder, but set with precious stones; and an iron chest containing the vessels of the sanctuary, cups and chalices and patens, all of gold. If there were aught else, Uncle Dick kept no record of it.

He came first upon the small iron coffers; hoisted one out upon the floor of the crypt, and prized it open with a crowbar. The sweat dropped upon his hands as he plunged them into the mass of dingy coins.

When he had cleared the chamber of the spoil, and it lay strewn upon the ground, showing darkly in the candle-light upon a black dome of shadow, Uncle Dick took his chin in his hand and set himself to strenuous consideration. How was he to carry away the booty? At first his brain ran swiftly and giddily, like a wheel turning; then the motion of his thoughts grew slower and settled to a steady revolution. He must get help. But whose? The treasure did not belong to him. But he would take it all the same: he had no faintest scruple on that point. Should he fetch his nephew? But Lancelot was a servant of Dean and Chapter; he might ("being my sister Maria's son, and a bit of a blameless prig," said Uncle Dick) consider it his duty to report the treasure-trove to the Dean; when a goodly proportion would in all probability be claimed by the crown; and where would Uncle Dick come in? That was not to be thought of. The stuff must be got to London at once. Uncle Dick wished fervently that he had used some misspent time in pursuing a friendship with some burglar of repute; and he immediately conceived a new admiration for the character of the skilful thief. In absurd contrast to the deft methods of the professional, he saw himself lugging his booty, grossly obvious, through the midnight streets, to the railway station. He would infallibly be arrested by the first policeman he met. The thing was grotesquely impossible. And yet burglars were accomplishing like feats, undetected, every night of the year. He thought of getting a cab. But, even supposing he could obtain a vehicle at that hour, without rousing half the town in the process, he would have to bribe the cabman—and be forever blackmailed afterwards. Meanwhile, the night was flying fast; and unless the spoil could be smuggled out of Northborough by the night mail, all would be lost. Clearly, what he wanted was an accomplice. Uncle Dick concentrated his whole energy of thought upon the word; and presently, the smiling, ruddy image of Mr. Samuel Penfold swam into his mind. "The very man!" said Uncle Dick, in a triumphant whisper (he dared not speak aloud). "He 's got packing-cases for samples, and a trap of his own. He 's straight, so far as I know. . . . I 'll risk it."

Out of the Cathedral, locking the doors behind him, along the dark streets, Uncle Dick hurried towards the house of Mr. Penfold.

He passed beneath the residence of Canon Glossop, looming upon the stars. "I 've euchred *you*, my reverend friend, whatever happens," said Uncle Dick, as he ran down the hill. As he ran, he prayed fervently that Mr. Penfold might be at home. A light burned behind the blind in Mr. Penfold's house; Uncle Dick knocked gently; and Mr. Penfold himself, in shirt and trousers, opened the door.

"How fortunate I was n't gone to bed, sir!" said Mr. Penfold, speaking low, with a subdued cheerfulness. "You know the reason, sir? Or perhaps you don't read that part of the daily paper. I never did myself, till lately;" and Mr. Penfold, with his repressed cheerfulness breaking

out all over him, explained that a week ago his wife had presented him with a daughter.

"No more jim-jams and church-servicing at all hours *now*, sir," said Mr. Penfold, shaking hands, as the two men stood in the little parlor, where Eleanor Warrilow had held that memorable talk with Mrs. Penfold. "No more world-without-end whims and fancies and such doldrums. My wife's a new creature, Mr. Thornhaigh, and will be, *I* say! And I don't forget how it was you first helped her, sending her as it were a female confidante, who tided her through, like—and there she is," said Mr. Penfold, beaming.

"I 'm very glad," said Uncle Dick, a good deal embarrassed. "And I 'm all the sorrier I 've got bad news for you, Penfold. The Consolidated 's gone up."

Mr. Penfold took the news with a steady visage. "It 's bad news indeed, and bad for me at this time in especial, Mr. Thornhaigh, I can't deny. Is there anything to be pulled out of the fire?"

"That depends," said Uncle Dick. And thereupon he told Mr. Penfold of his discovery, and of the dilemma in which he was. "Now, Penfold, will you stand in with me, and give me your word that you 'll never breathe of it to any living creature? For it 's a big thing, and it 's serious, I tell you," said Uncle Dick.

"Give me two minutes to think it out," said Mr. Penfold. He turned his back on Uncle Dick, and stood with one foot on the fender. The silence was broken by a faint wailing from the room above. Mr. Penfold stirred uneasily. "I 'll do it," he said. "I will that!" And he shook hands upon it.

"And the sooner we get about it the better," said Uncle Dick.

"Right," said Mr. Penfold.

At dawn that morning, Our Mr. Penfold of the Pelagic Fur Company, accompanied by a friend who seemed, from his muffled appearance, to fear the night air, went south by the mail train, with a heavy consignment of samples.

CHAPTER XXI

Summer waned into autumn, and autumn darkened into a green winter, with dripping westerly gales and continual rain; and every day, to Lancelot, was just as dreary as the day before had been, and as tomorrow would be. When the news went abroad of the failure of the Consolidated, the house in Saint Catherine's Gate was besieged by all sorts of people, who desired to see Mr. Thornhaigh, since he was not to be found at his office. But as that gentleman had unaccountably neglected to send his address, either to his nephew or his brother-in-law, the Reverend Charles had nothing to do but disclaim all knowledge of Mr. Thornhaigh's movements. So it was that people began to say that he was

shielding Mr. Thornhaigh; that they were both in a conspiracy; and, presently, that Lancelot was also involved; and, further, that all three had conspired from the beginning to rob the good folk of Northborough Cross. "What else," said Miss Starling, "could one expect from a minister of the Church who smokes (and drinks) and reads novels on Sunday—as I always said." And so it was that Lancelot and his father presently found themselves shunned as though they had committed a felony. Good old Mrs. Warrilow alone continued to call upon the Reverend Charles; and even begged him, as an old friend, to accept a check to help him over his most pressing difficulties. For the Reverend Charles found himself deeply involved in debt. He renounced cigars, and took to a pipe; gave up wine, and drank whisky and water; reduced his establishment to a "plain cook" with a "help"; and tried, hopelessly, to obtain work on the Press. The interest on Lancelot's little capital, and his own stipend, barely sufficed to pay the necessary expenses; and tradesmen began to send offensive letters.

The Cathedral restoration was stopped abruptly by order of the Dean and Chapter; and old Mr. Inkpen, who thought nothing of the loss of his savings in comparison with this disaster to his Cathedral, grew worse, and presently died. He was buried in the Cathedral, and so part of his ambition was fulfilled. Lancelot was left to carry on the work of surveyor to the Cathedral; but the Dean intimated that, owing to unforeseen misfortunes, the funds at the disposal of the Dean and Chapter did not admit of their offering him more than a nominal salary.

Meanwhile, Rosamund had been sent away from home, and forbidden to write to Lancelot; so she told him in a sad little note that he carried about with him.

The Reverend Charles talked of leaving Northborough. Lancelot said he would stay and carry through his work until the authorities could find a better man, and face through the trouble. His father even applied to the Bishop for a living; but his lordship replied with particular coldness; even hinting that Mr. Crane's reputation as a clergyman "fell short of that high ideal which his lordship could not but consider a not unreasonable standard to expect a minister of the Gospel to attain to." So the Reverend Charles paid his account with local gossip; and went about his duties still, and grew a little grayer and more bent.

Meanwhile the date fixed for the appearance in court of the directors and officials of the Southern Consolidated Investments Company, at the suit of its creditors, was postponed, and then fixed again, and again postponed. And meanwhile, there came nothing from Uncle Dick, save a hasty line occasionally, saying that his time was taken up with a little business which obliged him to travel continually from place to place.

On Christmas Eve, Lancelot sat before the fire, gazing at the green Yule log, sulkily hissing and smoking in the grate. The Reverend Charles

was smoking a long clay by the light of the Yule candles. Outside, the wind rattled at the shutters, and went by with a moan, and the rain dripped from the overflowing gutters.

Lancelot sat gloomily meditating. These days were all gray rain and mist and dead leaves, he thought. There was the eternal burden of debt, and a dead wall in front, barring all prospect; and there was Rosamund. Like a spring released, his mind always shifted back into the same groove.

The voice of his father broke upon his meditations. "The first Christmas for ten—eleven—years without your uncle," said the Reverend Charles. "I have ordered roast beef for to-morrow," he added. "We must n't afford turkey, you know. I hope you won't be disappointed, my dear boy. There 's a plum-pudding. The servants like it."

It was not the thought of the beef that touched his son with a sensation of irrepressible pathos, as he looked at the little gray-bearded clergyman nursing his knees in the worn arm-chair. Lancelot had seldom felt more miserable in his life than he did at that moment. Then the door-bell rang, steps and voices sounded in the hall, and Uncle Dick came suddenly into the room, with a gray-eyed young lady on his arm and his face shining.

"Mrs. Richard Thornhaigh!" said Uncle Dick. "She 's done it—she 's married Poor Richard, for better and worse! . . . For things are straightening out," continued Uncle Dick, when the burst of greetings had subsided. "I think we shall pull the Consolidated through, after all—I 've contrived to stave off the creditors, and get matters into my own hands, and the shares are going up. . . . We 're leaving England to-morrow for a spell—we leave here to-night—so we thought we 'd look in and pass the time of day, and get through a little necessary business before we sailed. Being Christmas Eve and all," said the Benefactor of his kind.

They sat down to eat and drink and make merry, and Uncle Dick talked continuously. Presently he took the Reverend Charles aside.

"How much will it take to clear you?" said he. "I mean, really to pay everything you owe. No one has ever been able to answer that question truthfully, so I 'll just ask you to put the amount rather over than under."

"Of course," said the Reverend Charles, who was trembling all over. "Of course, my dear Richard!" And, after a good deal of hesitation, he named a sum.

"I can let you have that, and a little more to play with." The financier produced a check-book. "There 's an amount standing to your credit on the Company's books—I can't explain now, but I 'll write you fully later on." He blotted a check and handed it to the Reverend Charles. "The other shareholders are getting a bonus too—'on Christmas Day in the morning,'" said Uncle Dick.

"My dear Richard—my dear Dick, it's marvellous—it's miraculous!" The little clergyman was unconsciously shedding tears. "However did you do it?"

"I could n't manage to get it done before. It took a little time to work. But it's wonderful what a little enterprise will do," said Uncle Dick.

"And so," said Dolly, as they stood in the hall, ready for the departure of the bride and bridegroom, "you're Cathedral Surveyor after all, Lance. And you're going to stay here and marry and settle down?"

"Yes," said Lancelot; "I am."

"Ah, well," said Dorothy. She looked at him with an expression he could not read. "Give my love to Rosamund," said she. "And—good-by!"

THE WINDING LANE

BY ETHEL HALLETT PORTER

THE wood-light grows more mellow-dim,
The leaves dance happily,
The russet path glows deeper hued
To greet her worthily,
And all the birds in chorus sweet
Sing, rapturous, insane,
When lassie comes to meet me
Adown the winding lane.

She's sweet as little roses are,
As quaint as mignonette,
And shy as modest pansy-buds,
With shower-jewels set;
She's Happiness! And from this world
I've nothing more to gain
When lassie comes to meet me
Adown the winding lane!

This earth would be a kindlier place,
If every man could know
The fragrance of a shady path
Where cool, green grasses grow;
Where, when the sunset hour came by,
And life was sweet and sane,
His singing lassie turned the stile
Adown the winding lane.

THE FUNNY SIDE OF MARRIED LIFE

By Christine Terhune Herrick

SHOULD you cherish the conviction that you can be really happy, though married, without a sense of humor, rid yourself of the belief at once. Beg, borrow, or steal such a sense, if you do not already possess it; or, if these are impossible, give your mind to cultivating even a rudimentary appreciation of a joke.

A sense of humor is indispensable to satisfactory married life, because much of this is either a joke or a tragedy. The latter is a most uncomfortable housemate, while the former soothes and sustains to a degree surpassing most consolations of religion and philosophy! So long as you can laugh at the little ironies of life, they don't sting very badly; but it is dreadful when you take them and yourself seriously!

For an illustration of what I mean, look at the very beginning of wedded life—the marriage service. Putting aside the tremendous satire of the ordinary man and woman swearing to love and honor each other as long as they both shall live, when neither one can have the slightest idea of the real character of the other or of the modifications of feeling and circumstances the years may bring, pass on to the chiefest jest of the ritual of matrimony:

"With all my worldly goods I thee endow."

(If we don't hear Cupid chuckle at this, it is because he has presided at the marriage ceremony so often that his chuckling apparatus is worn out.)

This joke has several aspects, all equally refreshing. One phase is presented when the penniless man marries the wealthy woman. He can well afford to plight his troth with fervor. His worldly goods would hardly keep her in hair-pins, and he has no hesitation in pledging them to her when he thinks of the stocks and bonds and ready money he gets in exchange. She says nothing about yielding her worldly goods to him, but he knows he is getting them just the same. As his mind—unwillingly, no doubt, but inevitably—hovers around the new motor-car or the blooded riding-horse or the swift yacht or the rare books or the exclusive club his bride represents, his sense of humor must be power-

fully held in abeyance to enable him to keep a straight face while he declares before the altar and "in the face of this company" that he endows her with the sum which has barely sufficed to pay his slim board.

Another fact of this especial joke displays itself when the stingy man marries. He too says with more or less emphasis that he endows his bride with all his worldly goods, but probably he makes several mental reservations. These will declare themselves later on when his wife asks him for money for a new frock or for housekeeping or for charity, perchance for carfare, or even—crowning indignity!—to enable her to do something for one of her own family. Then is the time when she herself needs a most robust sense of humor to savor the joke of the troth-plight at its full worth.

The ironies of the marriage service are by no means exhausted with the bestowal of the worldly goods. There are the clauses concerning sickness and health, poverty and riches. The man who affirms his intention of loving and comforting his wife in all these circumstances is usually prompt with affection and consolation so long as she is well and well-off. When she takes to the invalid list the love and comfort are noticeably modified, and his own perception of a joke is rarely keen enough to help him see how funny his attitude really is. There is nothing amusing in it to him. "It 's very hard on a man to have a sick wife," he is likely to inform the sympathetic listener—even if this be one of the witnesses of his marriage, who had heard his buoyant vows!

And she? Does she offer no provocation to amusement? Observe her when "for better" becomes "for worse," and see if there is not place for a sardonic grin.

"If my husband ever grudged me money [or drank, or struck me, or looked at another woman, or swore at me,—you may take your choice of a dozen varieties of "for worse"], I would n't live with him a day longer!"

Does n't that have a familiar ring? Unless Cupid has gone entirely out of earshot by the time this stage is attained, he must smile—or weep—at the declaration.

Housekeeping develops the humorous side of married life to an extent unguessed at by those who merely board. In a boarding-house or hotel neither the husband nor wife has a chance to assert that the other is absolute master or mistress of the joint establishment. (What is it, by the way, which makes humanity so anxious to prove itself badly off?) The contention for supremacy in suffering always seen between two persons who are comparing woes or grievances is particularly conspicuous in the home.

"If ever there was a man who was master in his own house, it is my husband! He has everything just as he wants it, without any regard

to my wishes," pronounces the wife; but in his own declaration of his position he is no whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

"My wife is the cock of the walk in our joint," he informs you, and with an agreeable mixture of figures goes on to tell how he is henpecked.

The humor of the situation appeals to the bystander, at least, for any one who has given attention to the matter is fully aware that the men and women who dominate are almost always those who claim that they are down-trodden and imposed upon. The story of the man who was chased through the house by his wife with the broomstick and finally took refuge under the four-post bed illuminates this. After he had been lying *perdu* for an hour or so, he cautiously raised the valance and peered out. His wife stamped her foot.

"Get back under there!" she cried, but he asserted his rights.

"While I have the spirit of a man," he returned, with all the dignity he could muster in the circumstances, "I will peek!"

One dares think after this that the man who had been brought into such subjection that he habitually spoke of "our hat" was probably a veritable domestic tyrant and was clever enough never to let his wife find it out!

Although there is a theory that men have more sense of humor than women, this may be questioned when household conditions are considered. Does a man laugh at his own discomfiture as a woman does? How would a man take the pleading of his wife for something "like father used to make"? She has never tried it, but his longing has become a byword. What joy to the wife when he is hoist by his own petard!

"My dear, these pies don't taste as mother's used to!" complained a husband. "They are good, of course, but not the sort I was fond of as a boy. Can't you do something to improve them?"

"I 'm afraid not, dear," rejoined the wife sweetly. "She takes so much pleasure in making them for you that I would hate to intimate to her that you don't enjoy them as you once did!"

Did he smile? I wonder! But I am very sure his wife would have chuckled if the conditions had been reversed.

Home economies are among the subjects which give play to a sense of humor. Here, perhaps, the man sees the joke better than the woman. I have noticed that few women care to have their efforts at reducing expenses by concocting cheap dishes no one cares to eat made the subject of humorous remarks. There a man's appreciation of the joke comes out strong, because it is n't on him!

On the other hand, when he attempts to save money by painting the porch himself and paints himself into a corner, his wife stands on the outside of his self-made prison and goes into convulsions of mirth without in the least convincing him that the situation is other than tragic. So, too, when he saws wood or splits kindling or cuts the grass

or puts a shingle on the roof, he receives admiration of his most amateurish performances as a merited tribute to excellence,—but when he fails he cannot laugh at himself.

A further proof of the superiority of the wife's sense of humor to any mere husband's appears when some other woman flatters him. For all that men have had to take the rough side of life, to come into contact with a harsh and cruel world and learn volumes concerning the seamy and treacherous aspects of existence, they are terribly gullible! The sheltered and unsophisticated woman could never choke down the praise that a man swallows with smiling composure. Some writer has remarked that the cleverest woman in the world is a fool in the hands of a stupid man if she loves him. This may be true—with limitations—but it is equally true that a clever man can be fooled by a very silly woman if she is pretty and can persuade him that she understands him!

Perhaps never is there more of a triumph over natural sex disqualifications than when a woman who loves her husband smiles indulgently and comprehendingly—not contemptuously—while he makes himself just a trifle absurd by his unquestioning acceptance of the appreciation of another woman. The wife knows so well what it is all worth! She is convinced that her husband loves her devotedly and faithfully—and yet he likes to feel that he has not ceased to be attractive to the other sex!

So does a woman? Of course she does, but she does not let it be seen so plainly. Should she permit her pleasure in admiration to be too perceptible, she is generally light-headed or ill-balanced, while it may be the most sensible and admirable of men who yields to the fascinations of an innocent Delilah. And his wife looks on as she would at the vagaries of a small boy. The husband would n't take it that way if the cases were reversed, you may be sure.

Hence my claim for the woman's advanced perception of humor. This, by the by, has been defined as a sense of the incongruous, and perhaps that is the reason a man takes the devotion of other men to his wife so seriously. To him there is nothing at all incongruous in it, bless his heart! "Young ass!" (or old one!) he will comment to himself, and wonder how so sensible a woman as Mary can stand such idiocy! It is altogether different when he receives the homage of another woman!

If a sense of humor is an essential in a dual life, what word is strong enough to express the need for it when children arrive? Then is the occasion when a man's necessity for humor is less than a woman's. Somehow a mother can never put her children sufficiently in perspective to make herself ridiculous about them. I don't mean to deny the absurdity she often manifests in her over-appreciation of their perfections, but that is less subtle than the exhibitions supplied by the other parent.

As for instance. The father comes in with a stern countenance.

"Mary, I met that boy of yours on the sidewalk and he was a disgrace! Dirty, his cap gone, a hole in his stocking! Can't you do anything to induce him to have a little care for his appearance?"

Later, the boy having been soaked, scoured, and arrayed in fresh garments, diffusing about him that peculiarly radiant cleanliness possessed in so impressive a degree by a recently tubbed child, the father views him approvingly.

"Pretty nice-looking boy of ours, eh, Mother?"

But when the lad takes a prize or wins a contest or distinguishes himself in some way, behold the father swelling with pride.

"I tell you, my dear, I feel proud of that boy of mine!"

I am sorry for any woman who cannot extract the full fun from this condition. She loses much of the best of life. The man never has a chance at anything just like it, for the mother always says in her heart, "that boy of mine," no matter what his scrapes or his shortcomings. She feels she makes a big concession when she refers to him aloud as "our son," and privately hopes his father appreciates the honor!

These same children do more to develop what might be called the joint sense of humor in husband and wife than any other one agency. The two laugh at the children together—perhaps laugh at themselves because of their absorption in their offspring, their faith in the youngsters' cleverness and achievements and good looks. There is nothing like such mirth to draw two people close to one another.

"A difference of taste in jests is a great strain upon the affections." One of the greatest, and the converse is true.

"We laugh at the same things and like the same things to eat," I heard some one say once in explanation of the close friendship existing between himself and a comrade. The happy marriage is founded on something more than this, but laughter at the same causes is a strong bond. In course of time the persons who make a practice of such mirth may learn to relish jokes on their own weaknesses and peccadilloes, and then a great gate of enjoyment and sympathy is open to them.

Do I seem to make too much of the urgency for a sense of humor in the married life? Set your wits to work and think how it simplifies matters if you can laugh instead of cry—or swear—when the water-pipes are frozen and you have to wash in a teacupful of water from a neighbor's, or when the butcher fails to appear and you must dine on bread and cheese and kisses, or in any one of a dozen other contingencies. Consider how nearly every exigency of life is eased by a laugh.

One of the most entertaining dinners I ever attended was in the country, when a sudden cold snap had burst the water-pipes too late for notice to be sent to the expected guests. The kitchen floor was flooded, and the cook had to prepare the dinner in rubber boots; but the fun of the situation was so clearly perceived by host and hostess and their

friends that the occasion became a whirl of jollity. Compare this with what the dinner might have been in the establishment of the serious-minded, and then venture to say that a sense of humor is not a saving grace!

That is not the best humor, however, which laughs at some one else and cannot laugh at oneself. If you can find amusement in your husband's mistaking an unknown woman's back for yours and bringing down upon himself the scorn of the stranger who thinks he is trying to scrape acquaintance with her, and consider yourself to be pitied when a man blunders into a similar mistake with you; if you can jeer at your better half when he makes a bad break in the course of conversation, and can feel only resentful mortification when he laughs over a like error on your part, you have something yet to gain in the way of a properly directed sense of humor. To my mind, no family joke is the right sort which means actual hurt to any one. Married life may have its tragic and ironical sides, but humor should be the means to lighten all but the bitterest of them.

A recollection comes to me of a couple I knew who had been burned out of house and home, saving little besides their own lives and their children and an inadequate insurance. The day after the fire a letter came telling them of the failure of a company in which they owned stock; their small boy was taken down with measles; their little girl developed whooping cough; and that evening their real-estate agent called to inform them that some tenants who owed a goodly sum had "skipped" between daylight and dark, with their furniture. The bearer of ill-tidings expected an outburst of distress, but the husband and wife looked at each other for a moment and then broke into wild mirth.

"What is the matter?" asked the agent, rather startled.

"Oh, it's so like Job!" both exclaimed, and the wife elucidated. "It's been just this way all day. Every little while some piece of bad luck would blow in, and don't you remember how in Job it was all the time?—'While he was yet speaking' some one rushed in with something dreadful that had happened? I never knew before what it was to be like any one in the Bible. Isn't it funny?"

"I thought they must be daffy if they'd come to the point where they found Job funny!" said the agent when he told the story.

Myself, I confess to understanding their attitude and admiring it.

Nothing really hurts you so long as you can laugh at it. Some troubles cannot be smiled away. They are the real kind, but they don't come every day. Cultivate the ability to find the fun that is at first invisible, and you will come to count the laugh the champion lifter of burdens.

THE WISDOM OF FOLLY

By Owen Oliver

A WISE man came to the end of his days,
And he saw his life laid bare:
The deeds he had done in his wise, wise ways—
And one little folly was there.

The works he had wrought, the thoughts he had thought,
In a big, big ledger were;
And The Angel Who Waits at Heaven's gates
Was striking a balance fair.

There was page and page of deed so sage
On the debit side of sin;
But the folly stood to the wise man's good;
And the Angel said: "Come in!"

MOST people have one true story to tell; but they don't tell it. I don't tell mine; but this is some one else's story, and no one will ever connect him with it if I alter the names. I'll call him Dallas. I might set down many things about him, but one is enough. He was the wisest man I ever knew.

There were several reasons why he told me his story, I fancy. No doubt the story burned to be told; and we were shipmates, and one tells stories at sea; and we were outside each other's lives; and the biggest reason was to point a moral for my good. That reason, of course, I don't explain. Well, here is the story, in his own words, so far as I can remember them.

Physicians never take their own prescriptions. I always preached that "the simple women are the dangerous ones"; but I thought it would take a clever woman to make a fool of me. Ethel Callington is n't a clever woman; not even clever enough to know that she has befooled me. If she guessed how things stand, she 'd cry. I 've come over these thousands of miles of sea to keep her eyes dry. You see how completely fooled I am!

She was such a slip of a creature; six-and-twenty, and with her hair down she 'd have passed for sixteen. It seemed ridiculous that she should be three years married. It shook one's faith in the universe

that she should be married to a man like Callington. "Saint and Satyr," Mrs. Leeder called them—Sally of the sharp tongue, I called *her*. There was no love lost between us then, because there had been a waste in the past.

I take half the blame for my past—Sally included. I put the other half on my upbringing in idleness. If ever I find a young fellow making an ass of himself, I try to oust folly by occupation. You can live in a hundred ways; but the first law of life is that you must do something. That is why—— But that's *your* story.

Well, I'd come within hailing of forty; and life at the moment was unsatisfying. At a garden party somebody introduced me to Ethel Callington, and I talked to her. She listened to me in a still, expressionless way at first. I had to interest her or pass her on. I did not want to pass her on. I enjoyed looking at the slim figure and the still, pale face. They were like iced drink to a fevered man. I laid myself out to amuse her; and presently she smiled the ghost of a smile.

"Do you know," I told her, "I never won a smile so hard!"

She looked at me in her grave fashion.

"It is very kind of you to take trouble to interest me," she said. "Thank you. . . . Yes. You have interested me; very much. Now you will like to talk to some one who is clever and can interest you."

"My dear lady," I protested, "don't you know that talkers prefer to listen to themselves? I once travelled for two hours with a lady, and she did not let me get in a dozen words. At the end of the journey she told me that she had never enjoyed a conversation so much! This afternoon I have been enjoying conversation at your expense."

She smiled her faint smile again.

"You only say that to put me at my ease," she declared. "Thank you again! . . . There is something that I often want to say to clever people; but I've never had the courage before."

"And you have now?" I asked.

"I think I have," she owned.

"Then—— Those people in the corner seat are going at last. I began to think that they belonged to the bench! Shall we sit there? . . . Now you can show your bravery!"

"Well. . . . I want to say, 'Please, clever people, I am not quite so stupid as you imagine. I do think of things to say; and if you seemed to want to hear me, I would say them.' . . . It's funny that I can say it to you."

"Not funny at all," I denied. "I'm not clever enough to frighten!"

"You are clever enough," she asserted; "but it isn't cleverness that frightens me. I don't think clever people are usually kind; and you are. So—— Perhaps you can make out what I mean?"

"I think," I said, "you mean what no one ever makes out. We

take to a few people; and to the many we don't. I don't like long words like affinities. I'll put it in plain Saxon. You and I are going to be friends. Pardon my bluntness. You 're a child to me. . . . Friends, eh?"

She looked at me in her grave way again; and again I had the feeling of a big iced drink.

"Have you courage enough to say 'friends,'" I asked, "or only 'friendly'?"

"Friends," she pronounced. She laughed under her breath, like a child who has been given a new toy.

I did n't laugh. I was wondering whether my "friendship" was a good gift to give her. I don't think I ever thought for the woman before, but—I never smear facts. I cared very much for Ethel, right from the start. I suppose goodness was a new toy to me. She was good. . . . Goodness is n't so catching as evil; but it *is* contagious. She infected me. I did n't take it very badly; but I was careful of her; very careful. No one ever said anything against *her* on account of our friendship. I gathered that some people said things to her against me. I asked her why she cut Sharp-tongued Sally and one or two others. She answered very soberly that they had slandered a friend. I thought of a legal maxim: "The greater the truth, the greater the libel." . . . Well, if they said that I meant any harm to her, it *was* slander. I'll swear that by any gods that are worshipped in the heart of a hardened sinner; by my dead mother, and the sister who loves me, and the faith that I keep with a man; by Ethel herself—and she 's the worshipped saint in my calendar! I want to make that clear before I go on.

Our friendship lasted just three months. If I 'd have gone on with it for about two years, I reckon I 'd have caught enough goodness from her to make me a really nice man! I like to think that she caught no harm from me and some happiness. She needed it, poor girl. Her husband was a drunkard. In his sane mind, he respected her, and was not intentionally unkind. I like to give other devils their dues, as well as myself. Sober he curbed his coarse tongue before her, and did the the best thing he could for her by leaving her alone. He was not often sober. Sometimes he was drunk in company. Twice I helped her take him home. Once he was incapable of talking. Once he was maudlin. He wept and said that her cruelty had driven him to it. She spoke to me about that the next day.

"You know," she said, "I am not good at expressing myself. There are things too that one can't express; but—— You are the one friend I have had for years and years. . . . I did n't drive him to it. It went on before he knew me. . . . If I had been able to care for him, I might have saved him. I feel responsible to that extent. That is why I don't leave him. I can go and take the drink away when he is home. No one else dares. . . . No. Don't speak. Silence is best. . . . Thank

you! . . . Drive me in your motor, will you? And we won't talk. . . . Every night in my prayers I thank God for your friendship."

It was at the end of the three months when she came to me one evening. It was about half-past eight. Her face was like marble. Her eyes—they were big always—seemed unnaturally large. There was a bruise on one cheek, and a little cut on her lip. She stood very still and looked at me without speaking.

"Ethel!" I said. "Oh, Ethel!"

I—I tell you I could have *cried!* I!

She did not speak.

"He has struck you!" I said hoarsely.

"He has done more than that," she said. "He has thrashed me." She said this very quietly. Then she gave a sharp cry. "Take me away!" she begged wildly. "Take me away!"

My heart seemed to leap out of me; and then back again.

"Yes," I said.

I packed a little bag—she had her bag—and we went out. I called a cab and told the driver to go to Euston.

"Where shall we go, dear?" I asked. I was mad with the rapture of possession. My arms were aching to go round her. Thank Heaven they did n't before she spoke!

"It will be better for me to go alone," she said. "If you took me, people would misunderstand. They do not know you as I do."

And I knew her; and misunderstood *her!*

There was a long pause before I spoke. I was thinking chiefly how to prevent her guessing that I had misunderstood; wondering if she had noticed my bag. I wonder sometimes now. . . . Sometimes I think—— Well, never mind.

"Dear girl," I said—I hardly knew my own voice, it was so gentle; "fatherly," I thought, and almost laughed—"I have considered all that. I am taking you to my sister's. There is time for me to come back to-night. I will see your husband to-morrow, and—and obtain a separation."

"You will not—will not——"

I laughed softly.

"Oh, no!" I said. "Oh, no! I would give a few years of my life to thrash him to death, but for your sake I won't."

I did n't—not to death!

"Thank you, dear friend!" She sighed. "I have put up with things, because your friendship was possible while I lived—at home." She laughed bitterly at the word. "Now I must go away, I think. A woman's name. . . . Dear friend, you know."

"Dear," I said, "I know. You shall stay with my sister, and I—I have to go abroad for a good while soon. I will go at once."

"God bless you!" she said. "I—I——" Her voice broke, and she turned her head away. I let down the window and shouted to the driver.

"Hi! This is n't the way to King's Cross."

"You said Euston, sir," he protested.

"Nonsense!" I contradicted. "King's Cross."

The trains to my sister's go from there.

"You heard me say King's Cross, did n't you?" I asked Ethel.

She did not answer. That is why I wonder if she guessed that I thought that she meant—— Well, if she did, she forgave me.

I took her to my sister's; told Mary the whole story; told her that I was going away.

"She 's the world to me," I said, "if she knew. I 'd lie down and be a cushion to ease her little feet. . . . Love her for me, Mary. I dare n't stay. . . ."

"My dear boy!" Mary sobbed. "My dear, good, bad boy! *I* always knew there was no better man than you!"

Women are good judges of ninety-nine men out of a hundred, but they can't judge the hundredth: the one they care for!

I went away. I did n't even kiss Ethel when we said good-by. I think she would have let me; but I knew she 'd torment herself about it afterwards. And besides—— It is n't easy to find the right words sometimes. I felt as if she was too—too precious to soil. You see, I was a fool very completely. . . .

Anyhow, I arranged a separation for her; settled up my affairs—you see, I am an idler, so there was n't much to settle—booked my passage for the next week; and here I am. An exile to folly! . . . Well, well!

I don't know whether you see the moral. If you want to apply it——

The rest of Dallas's remark is the truth that I don't tell. I did n't apply his moral—who ever profits second-hand from other people's experience? Now I rather wish that I had; but that 's nothing to do with his story.

I was home in three months; and a few days afterwards I met Dallas in the Strand. I scarcely knew him. He had shaved off his mustache, and he looked absurdly young.

"Hullo, Dallas!" I said—you will understand that the name I said was n't "Dallas." "I thought you were staying abroad for years."

"So did I," he said; "but I found something to do here."

We shook hands, and I laughed.

"It seems to me that you did n't apply your moral," I remarked.

"Did you?" he asked.

"Well—no! . . . I was a —— fool. . . . Come and dine with me at my club to-night."

He looked hard at me.

"You 're a chap I 'd like to be friends with," he said frankly; "but I can't. I told you a certain story, and—Mrs. Callington's husband died while I was on the voyage out. She is going to marry me; and you see——"

"Oh!" I said. "I see. . . . Well, since I am to lose your friendship—I 'd have liked it, Dallas—on account of enjoying your conversation, you must give me compensation: tell me the finish of the story. It won't matter, since we shan't meet again."

"There 's a deal of passing on in life," he said; "and sometimes you have to pass on a good hand. . . . Yes, old chap, I 'll tell you; and you can make one of your little stories of it, if you like. Nobody will guess that it 's true! Come along! We 'll have a cigar together, anyhow."

We sat down in a quiet restaurant to coffee and cigars; and he told me the end of his story:

I was a bigger fool than I thought over Ethel Callington. I had the cable when I landed; and the ship was returning the next day, and I returned with it. That was ordinary folly; almost excusable in a man of my age. He does n't give up so much by settling down with a wife. The queer thing was that a conscience woke in me. I hardly knew that I had such a thing, so far as a woman was concerned. I felt that I was n't a bit worthy of her—that was n't folly either, but fact—and I felt that before my fair white lady gave herself to this reprobate she ought to know just what she was doing. I told her as soon as we met; while we were holding hands hard, and I suppose she was wondering that I did n't kiss her.

"Ethel," I said, "I 'm afraid of your goodness. I—the things you heard of me were pretty true. I 'm not the man you think me, dear simple soul. . . . I did n't know how good you were till that night when—I was fool enough to think you meant me to run off with you. . . . And of course I was going to. . . . I don't know if you 'll take the risk of marrying me. I want you. . . . I don't think you have the least idea how *much* I want you."

She gave a queer little cry.

"I wonder," she said, "if you even dream how much I want you to want me! Sometimes I am frightened because I care so much!"

"My dear!" I said. "My dear!"

I said a lot of other things that I need n't tell you.

"I shan't make you bad, Ethel," I promised at last. "You 'll make me good . . . but not so alarmingly good as you are, my dear."

"But I don't think I am so alarmingly good," she whispered, with her face buried on my shoulder. "I saw your bag that night, you know; and I—oh, I had to fight with myself so hard! . . . Now you won't think such a lot of me, and love me so much!"

"My dear," I told her, "I should love you with my whole heart, whatever you did, and whatever you do."

"That," she said, "is how I feel—and always have felt—about you! You see—I don't think there is so much difference in what clever people and silly people think and feel. It is only that I can't say things, and you can. . . . I think you are a very, very clever man! . . . Except about me!"

"About you," I owned, "I am a perfect fool!"

She laughed a soft laugh; and then she made the only clever remark that she has ever been guilty of. She was "a little above herself" at the moment, she protests, when I tax her with it.

"That only proves your cleverness," she told me. "If folly makes you—you and me!—happy, it is wise to be a fool. . . . Two fools!"

And as the days go on, we are proving the wisdom of our folly!



CLICK O' THE LATCH

BY NANCY BYRD TURNER

THE silence holds for it, taut and true;
The young moon stays for it, wistful white;
Winds that whimpered the sunset through,
Sigh for it, low and light.

Click o' the latch, and he 'll come home,—
A stir in the dusk at the little gate.
Hush, my heart, and be still, my heart,—
Surely it 's sweet to wait!

The tall skies lean for it, listening—
Never a star but lends an ear—
The passionate porch-flowers stoop and cling,
Parting their leaves to hear

Click o' the latch, and him come home,—
A step on the flags, a snatch of song.
Hurry, my heart, be swift, my heart,—
How did we wait so long!

BUM O'REILLY, PROBATIONER

By Lucy Copinger

BUM O'REILLY pulled off his ragged coat and flung his still more ragged cap joyfully down on the bricks of the school-yard. "Come on! I dare any of youse to tech it! Come on an' try—I dare youse!" Thus taunted, the group of boys before him fell into various belligerent attitudes, and one of the bolder spirits rashly kicked the hat into the gutter. That his opponent was twice his size did not cause Bum a moment's hesitation. With a whole-hearted yell, he flung himself forward, and in a moment the two were rolling about on the ground, a pummelling, kicking mass. Immediately the yard, so recently the picture of peaceful boyish gambols, became a scene of carnage. A good fight on forbidden territory was too good an opportunity to lose, and sides were at once taken by every boy in the yard, except a few timid First-Graders, who burst into tears and added their lamentations to the general uproar. It was only after the Principal, rushing distractedly out, had gathered the chief contestants into his office, that peace descended upon the school-yard.

It was not until dismissal time had come and the last First-Grader had gone that Bum, battered but cheerful, reappeared. He wore an expression of vainly concealed happiness.

"Gee, but I got a busted nose!" he remarked complacently. Miss Lucy ignored him, but her displeasure was wasted.

"It 'll be swollen all over m' face by termorrer, I betcher," he continued with satisfaction. Bum's self-constituted task was to help Miss Lucy every day after school, and as he spoke he fell to work upon the blackboards.

"I don't wish you to help me to-day, James," said Miss Lucy coldly.

As she expected, Bum was visibly affected by this. "Aw, now, miss," he pleaded, "lemme help yer. Wotcher want to be havin' all that there chalk-dirt in yer mouth fer?"

Miss Lucy was adamant, however, and Bum departed with dampened spirits. The next afternoon he appeared with such a chastened countenance and such a beautifully sticky, quite unlicked apple-on-the-stick that Miss Lucy could not find it in her heart to be unforgiving. It was an unpleasant surprise to her when in the middle of the afternoon recess he was again returned to her, gory but triumphant. Vexed beyond discre-

tion, Miss Lucy stood him in the corner, although she had well learned in those hard days before she had come to understand how to handle this especial scholar of hers, that nothing was to be gained and all to be lost by such high-handed treatment. Stood in the corner, Bum unrepentantly amused himself by doubling up his arm and watching the swell of the hard little muscles through the ragged coat-sleeve.

Miss Lucy, called out of the room, a few minutes later returned to an uproarious Primer Class. Sophie Bauerschmidt dramatically described events:

"Miz, Bum wus standing in the corner making long noses at uz wot you said ain't nize, und a big boy come in, und Bum made a nose at him, und then Bum he said, 'Come on und spid in my eye, I dare you,' und, Miz, the boy done id, und they wuz un orful fight, und all us children run around und hollers."

"I simply can't stand him any more," Miss Lucy declared to the Principal. "He keeps the class so disturbed that I feel I cannot do my duty to them."

The Principal was sympathetic but helpless. However, the next afternoon he came into Miss Lucy's room with a pleased look.

"Well, that young hoodlum is gone," he said, with a nod toward Bum's empty seat. "It seems, he is the leader of a gang known deservedly as the 'Roughnecks,' and they got into a stone battle with an opposing gang, during the course of which your young man heaved a brick through the plate-glass window of Bauerschmidt's saloon. Incidentally, Officer Mulcahey gathered him in. His case comes up in the Juvenile Court to-morrow morning. You will be summoned as a witness, to testify as to O'Reilly's character, or lack of it. I'll be down there to back you up in everything you say, and if you make it good and strong it'll be a year at St. Vincent's Industrial School. Good news, eh?"

To his surprise, Miss Lucy received his good news with a strange lack of enthusiasm. She turned to the board, where she had been explaining to Anna Karenina why two and three could not possibly make one.

"Well, anyhow," she remarked illogically, "I guess the O'Reilly income bought most of that plate-glass window."

Then, because the empty seat seemed somehow unfairly to accuse her, she put Frederick William Schneider in it, and tried to tell herself that it did n't seem queer to see his smug, proper little countenance there. At frequent intervals she was conscious of the smiling face of the Principal appearing at her door, repeating congratulations.

"Old Cheshire cat!" she muttered, as she made an unpedagogical face at his retreating unconscious back. "How he gloats!"

The next morning, early, Miss Lucy arrived at the Juvenile Court.

After a sleepless night, she had finally decided that it was her duty to her class, to the Principal, and to Bum himself, that she should do all in her power to help in removing the boy from unfavorable home influences and the company of the "Roughnecks," to the right living of the Reform School. So it was with an easy mind that she entered the Juvenile Court-room. The body of the room was filled with benches on which sat the youthful transgressors, with their parents, awaiting trial. At one end, on a raised platform, was the Judge's desk, with the bar before it, and a small enclosure to the right for the accommodation of any chance visitors. It was to this last that Miss Lucy was conducted, and from here, as she waited for the case of O'Reilly to be called, she witnessed clear, impartial justice tempered with a very humane mercy, dispensed to what seemed an endless procession of erring boyhood. The Court was a newly established one in Miss Lucy's city, with a beneficent head, of whom she had heard much. In the course of that morning she saw boys of twelve or thirteen who under the old order would have received the brand of a jail sentence for some thoughtless prank, released with a word of advice and warning, placed on the probation list for another chance, or at the worst committed to one of the industrial schools. To Miss Lucy, as she sat there and watched the cases that came before the kindly Judge, the saddest creatures of all were the mothers. There was one question that the Judge asked that, no matter how vicious and sullen the offender, always received the same answer.

"'*Stabat mater,*'" softly said a woman who sat beside Miss Lucy, a woman whose great heart and mind and fortune had been given to this problem of the city's young. "Wherever you go, in whatever city, always the same answer to that question: 'My boy was always a good boy, Judge.' God bless and pity the mothers! They follow their sons to the penitentiary doors—sometimes even to the gallows steps—with those same pitiful words."

So absorbed was Miss Lucy in the spectacle before her that it was with a start that she heard the clerk's voice, "James O'Reilly to the bar!" and she saw Bum, his mother, and Officer Mulcahey making their way up to the Judge's desk. One glance at the voluminous, untrammelled figure of Mrs. O'Reilly—clad in widow's weeds consisting of a greasy black wrapper and a disreputable bonnet enveloped in several yards of black veiling—and Miss Lucy knew that that lady had succumbed to a habit of hers when life grew too stressful of comforting herself with a "little drap." Under such circumstances, she invariably buried Mr. O'Reilly.

She had not much time to worry over this, however, before the Judge motioned her to a position at his right. There she stood while Officer Mulcahey and herself held up their right hands, and the Clerk of the Court rapidly muttered something about "the truth, and nothing but

the truth." Then the Judge, having read the charge, took off his glasses and regarded Bum. As Miss Lucy, too, looked at her late scholar, she was amazed to see how little he really was. He had always seemed so much larger than the other First-Graders, but now, facing the dignity of this tribunal, he seemed only a child, little, dirty, and forlorn. Suddenly Miss Lucy surprised herself by sniffling.

"Now, don't be a fool," she cried to herself angrily, blinking her eyes rapidly and fastening her gaze and her thoughts on Officer Mulcahey. The officer was telling how he had come upon the two gangs in the midst of the stone battle, just in time to see Bum hurl the brick that had shattered the window. All the time the officer was telling his story the superintendent from the Reform School was hovering in the background, waiting—"like a long-nosed bird of prey," Miss Lucy thought unjustly. Then the Judge turned to Mrs. O'Reilly, who, during the taking of the officer's testimony, had been weeping loudly, her widow's veil coming in very conveniently as a handkerchief. "Madam, is this boy your son?" the Judge inquired, not unkindly.

At this question Mrs. O'Reilly's grief burst all bounds. "Me only one!" she cried wildly. "Me little Jimmy! Me only child! The boy of me heart, and me nothin' but a poor lonely widder woman!"

"Ah, a widow!" said the Judge sympathetically, and then he looked at the record of the case before him, in which record "Martin O'Reilly, garbage remover," was entered as the active father of a numerous progeny.

"Some mistake here," he said sharply to the Clerk.

"Your Honor," explained Miss Lucy in a timid whisper, "it 's not a mistake. She always thinks she 's a widow when she gets—worried."

"I see," said the Judge gravely, but Miss Lucy detected a furtive twinkle in his eye as he dismissed Mrs. O'Reilly with a grave remark concerning the impropriety of intruding on a widow's grief. Then the Judge turned to Bum.

"Well, James," he began severely, "you have heard the evidence against you. Have you anything to say for yourself as to why you threw a brick through this window?"

"Mister, I never had no more stones," said Bum, with an innocence that was real and unmistakable.

For a moment the twinkle came again into the Judge's eye.

He addressed Miss Lucy.

"I understand that you are this boy's teacher," he said. "What kind of a boy is he in school?"

Now, Miss Lucy had memorized a neat, well worded little speech expatiating upon Bum's troublesomeness, his truancy and general bad conduct. But as the Judge asked this question Bum raised his eyes to her and hope sprang into his face. It was plainly the call of one in

trouble to his friend for help—appealing, hopeful, confident. As pal to pal, the two spoke silently to each other across the Judge's Bar.

"He is a very good boy," said Miss Lucy.

As she spoke, she was aware that a figure suddenly upheaved itself from one of the front benches, and she was conscious of looking into the amazed face of the Principal. She clutched the rail defiantly. "He is a very good boy," she repeated firmly, "one of my best pupils."

For a moment the Judge's eyes rested upon Miss Lucy. Then he fumbled silently through his records for what seemed ages to Miss Lucy. Had she saved this dear ragamuffin of hers, or would it be a Reform-School sentence? Her hands were icy and her checks burnt.

Finally the Judge spoke.

"James," he said kindly, "I am going to suspend judgment in your case for a month. During that month you will be under the surveillance of one of the Juvenile Court Probation Officers. This officer's report on you will depend, in turn, largely upon your teacher's report of you—your teacher being, I am sure, trustworthy, honorable" (here Miss Lucy blushed violently), "and also, I believe, a stanch—a very stanch—friend of yours. You may go."

Monday morning the Principal greeted Miss Lucy with a sour face. "And yet you object to being classed legally with idiots and criminals! You—heaven forbid!—even want to serve on grand juries. Tell me, will you, exactly why you acted as you did?"

"Well," said Miss Lucy judicially, "I just didn't like the Reform School superintendent's nose."

ABOUT WOMEN

ONE of the easiest ways to make an enemy of a woman is to give her advice that she knows is good.

A MAN may be interested in a clever woman, but the one he really admires is the one who thinks he is clever.

To nearly every woman there comes at least once a time when the demands of her self-respect seem all out of proportion to its value.

WOMEN are tolerant of their own men, but merciless in their judgment of others. Men condone in other women much that they would not tolerate in their own.

SOMETIMES a woman refuses to divorce a man who has been a failure as a husband, simply because her pride will not permit her to admit publicly that her judgment is at fault.

Ann M. Walker

THAT BLOOMING AZALEA

By Agnes Edwards

WE went aboard the night before the steamer sailed—I say "we," for there were about four hundred of us in the first cabin, but I was all alone. I wanted to be alone. I wanted time and solitude to reflect and to recover, recovery meaning in my case, as it does in the case of nine young women out of ten, from an *affaire de cœur*.

I was not perfectly sure I wanted to recover. In fact, as I looked about my little stateroom and saw everywhere the evidences of Ernest's devotion, I felt with a gratified thrill that it was rather pleasant to be in possession, so to speak, of a man so attentive and so truly considerate of one's wishes and comforts. That he was thoughtful and considerate, admitted of no controversy. Instead of the conventional cut flowers, he had sent me a sturdy blooming azalea which would last all the way over; he had supplied me with an electric flash, a fountain-pen, a small folding camera, and excellent guide-books marked with convenient signs. He had seen to it that I had some English coin for tips on the steamer, and some Italian change for immediate use at Naples.

In fact, there was nothing, absolutely nothing, in which he had failed, and I knew that these attentions were not merely sporadic evidences of an infatuation. Ernest always displayed the same forehandedness toward every one; his sister once told me that he invariably purchased theatre tickets two weeks in advance, and his mother was a walking eulogy of his virtues. Added to this, he was a well-set up, well-groomed young fellow, with a steady heart and head, and good prospects. And, most important of all, he was in love with me, and I was, it must be confessed, a little in love with him. Why, then, was I fleeing to Italy? Why did not that smiling face and genial voice fill me with more than merely agreeable affection? Why did not those constant and assiduous attentions, of which the comfort of my stateroom was but one expression, fill me with greater assurance? Why did I not accept at once his pleading to let him take care of me always? Why? Why? And I fell asleep, still wondering.

The next morning I was waked by the cheerful voice of my neighbor next door. It was such a pleasant voice that I felt as if a shaft of sunlight had fallen across my little room.

"Tizzy?" said the voice. "Tizzy?" Was this a fantastic exclamation or an equally fantastic appellation? In any case, it had a jolly sound, and the mellifluous English intonation gave it added charm.

"Tizzy," repeated the voice again, buoyantly, "it 's a glorious morning—glorious." There was a pause, then a bell rang and the steward came running.

"I say," called the voice, "I want my bath at eight and my tea at quarter before. What about you, Tizzy?" There was no answer, and the voice continued amiably, "Cold bath, you know, steward, and a slice of toast with the tea."

"Very well, sir;" and the steward evidently vanished.

It must have been the energetic owner of the voice who then proceeded with a lively campaign of pulling out trunks, stropping a razor, letting down the wash-stand, and struggling with the porthole, for "Tizzy," whatever or whoever it was, made no sound of any sort.

"I say, Tizzy," called the voice, after a brief pause, "you 'll need your sweater on; it 's cold. Can I get it for you?"

The answer was an indistinguishable murmur, but evidently enough for the owner of the voice, for I heard the trunk being opened again, and a gay "Here it is, Tizzy. Can I get you something else?"

"No, thank you," came a faint feminine response; and I knew then that Tizzy was his wife.

"Did you arrange with the stewardess about your bath-hour," queried the voice solicitously, "or would you like me to see about it?"

"I did," was the brief rejoinder.

"And when is it to be?" came the voice, evincing what I, in my solitary estate, considered a very flattering interest in the matter.

"Eight-thirty," answered Tizzy colorlessly, and I felt myself growing indignant at her indifference. He was such a cheery soul and seemed so anxious to please her, and she seemed so unappreciative. And as I lay there—for I was scheduled for second breakfast, and they were preparing for first—I could not but feel this more and more. The thin partition between us, with its opening at the top for ventilation, made it impossible not to hear every word spoken in the next room, and although I tried by various jinglings and judicious coughings to make them aware of my presence, it was quite futile. The voice kept up the same cheerful stream of conversation and ejaculation, while the owner of the voice splashed and shaved and rubbed himself, and shook out his clothes, and the voice of Tizzy, weak and curt, replied in occasional monosyllables.

"Odd," I mused, as I began my own morning toilet, "how sunny men like that always marry low-spirited women. I wonder what 's the matter with Tizzy?"

However, I had no means of determining, for I did not see my next-door neighbors that day or for several days. As I have said, there were

four hundred of us in the first cabin, and I could not pick out the young man to whom I had credited the fresh young voice, or the listless girl whom I had pictured as the unenthusiastic Tizzy. As they used a different corridor to approach their cabin, they never passed my door, and although I heard them night and morning, nearly a week passed before the voice and its echo found their habitation. And in that week many things happened.

It is rather a curious situation to find oneself a third in a conjugal relationship—an invisible member, as one might say, of a marital partnership; and yet every morning I heard the voice call out, "How are you, my dear?" and then proceed through the matutinal preparations.

"Here 's your tea, Tizzy," it would say affably. "How is it? Here, let me add a little water. That 's right." And then, "Time for your bath, Tizzy. Here are your slippers. Skip along, now;" and he would open the door for her.

Such unceasing, unwavering consideration I had never heard in my life. I was amazed at the minuteness and persistence of his attentions. He always asked her what dress she was going to wear, helped to get it down, and finally buttoned her into it. And he was equally friendly about his own affairs. He confided in her his daily plans, what the weather was like, what suit he was going to wear, what he had discussed with the men in the smoking-room, all in a frank, boyish way that was very attractive to me. I fancied they had been married a year or two, and it pleased me to think that his thoughtfulness still kept the ardor of courtship days. And, for some reason or other, I found myself thinking of Ernest. He was very much the same type of man, he had the same interest in little things, the same solicitude over details.

"That 's what really counts," I reflected, as I struggled with the hooks on my dress—Tizzy was being hooked at that very moment by efficient fingers—"some one who really cares about you every day; who looks after you in all sorts of trifling matters as well as in bigger things;" and I looked at the flowering azalea more favorably.

It took me a long time to understand Tizzy. Her husband was vivacity itself, but she seemed sulky. He was chatty, bright-tempered, obliging. She was taciturn, unresponsive, indifferent. He was interested in everything, particularly in her and her affairs; she was interested in nothing—least of all in him and his affairs. I used to wonder why she never talked, and it was a long time before it dawned on me that she never had a chance. Mr. Tizzy, for so I called him, was like a merry water-rill that runs on and on and on. His cheerfulness was commendable, but it was also unendable. It was persistent, insistent, incessant. Every idea that entered his head immediately left it by way of his mouth. His solicitude for Tizzy, I realized with slow realization, was only a habit. His questions concerning her health, her occupations, her dress, and her desires

were actuated by an evanescent yet perpetual curiosity, by an insatiable mania for collecting facts. I began to feel compassion for the girl, whom I pictured as no longer a bride, but still young enough to chafe under the inexorable dominion of a tyranny of kindness. I was conscious that she was already drooping under the resistless battery of attentiveness as a flower would droop under the merciless glare of continual sunshine. And the sturdy azalea which Ernest had bought because it would last all the voyage began to look hateful to me.

And then, one night, the unexpected happened. It was one of those evenings, nearing the end of the trip, when a few public-spirited individuals get up what is termed euphemistically an "entertainment" in the saloon dining-room. Against my wish I was borne thither, and, ensconcing myself in the seat of the scornful, I surveyed the people who had already assembled. There were four ladies playing cards in a corner near me, and when the entertainment commenced three of them started to lay down their cards, but the fourth, a starved and faded little creature of fifty-five or thereabouts, clung to hers tenaciously, and not only insisted upon playing but on whispering throughout the whole performance. I glared at her reprovingly; could she not talk in some other time and place? Why must she disturb an entire company with her eager, breathless undertones? And just then a fresh-faced, stoutish man, immaculate, hearty, beaming, appeared at the door.

"Here 's your coat, Tizzy," he called in the cheerful tone there was no mistaking and with the firmness there was no dodging. "I thought you ought to have it in this draughty room. Here, slip it on;" and the process I had so often heard I now witnessed, as her lord and master and possessor wrapped Tizzy up in her coat and his prattlings.

So this was Tizzy! This worn, repressed woman who had whispered so greedily throughout the entertainment. Ah, I understood now that she had to make the most of every moment! He was so cocky, so noisily eupeptic, that I had pictured him as young and Tizzy as a little younger. I saw now that he was not young; that his good humor was not even to be downed by age, and that Tizzy was like all exhausted creatures, without age, without color, almost without sex, and for some unaccountable reason it flashed through my mind that perhaps one did not even spell her name with a capital.

For a moment my eyes were riveted upon them—those two people in whose most private life I had participated morning and night without volition, and then I turned my face away. Considering my peculiarly intimate knowledge of them, it seemed indecent to survey them in the flesh.

That night, after we had all retired—I to my stateroom and Tizzy and Mr. Tizzy to theirs—I lay awake, thinking. I was trying to recall some man of my acquaintance who was silent, morose, uncommunicative.

I regretted that Trappist monks were vowed to celibacy; surely a Trappist would be an ideal husband. At all events, the only possible companion for life must be one who would be willing to let you live your life while he lived his. Neglect would be infinitely preferable to being smothered, stifled, and overwhelmed with perpetual advice, optimism, and attention. And I got up, flung my coat about me, picked up the flowering azalea, and, tiptoeing my way to the deck, threw it over the rail.

A LITTLE CONFESSION

By Ellis O. Jones

I AM a Child.

I think I average up pretty well with other children.

I like to play around and investigate and ask questions and feel that every day I am becoming better acquainted with the world.

I like to go to school when they make it interesting, and I don't like to go to school when they don't make it interesting.

I am very selfish, which, they inform me, is wrong, but, in spite of everything that is told me, I can't keep from thinking of myself before any one else.

I hear old people say that they are unselfish, but I never could see that they really were. "Number One" always figures very prominently in whatever they do.

I like my father and my mother, especially when they are in a good humor.

I don't like them as a matter of principle, nor because they are particularly wonderful, but chiefly because I am used to their ways. And then, of course, they are used to my ways, which helps a great deal.

I suppose I could get used to other parents, if necessary, and like them just as well.

I never think of leaving my parents even when they are harsh, for I know that other parents would be just as faulty at times.

I don't know whether I honor my father and my mother or not, as the Bible teaches. I don't really know what the word "honor" means. I think old people should be more careful in the use of their words.

I make these few confessions in the interest of philosophy, ethics, science, and the general welfare.

I should be glad to elaborate upon application.

I want to be set right before the world, and I want the world to be set right before me.

I am a Child.

A COMMUNAL EXECUTION

By Francis James MacBeath

"IT 'S hard, boys. A lot o' you are my friends, and I ain't never shot a man yet; but I 've sworn to uphold the law, and, by God, I 'm going to do it! You know me."

Zeb Jenkins, able sheriff of Fayette County, stood behind the prison gate of inch-iron bars and fronted an impassioned, ever-increasing mob of men and boys and inciting women. His face was drawn and gray, but the set eyes did not flinch.

The faces before him were not criminal. They showed determination, courage, anger. A few were irresolute, waiting to be led, more were flushed with a savage lust that boded ill to a cowering wretch within the jail.

Through the gathering dusk the Sheriff perceived the district attorney of the county. "You talk to 'em, Major," he begged. "You can make 'em understand. I 'll hold 'em back. Come in here." He touched his rifle to support his words, as the lawyer glanced apprehensively at the men about him.

"Shut up, Zeb!" some one shouted from the mass. "This is too big a job for you."

"Put down that toy or you 're goin' to get hurt," another threatened.

The District Attorney had pushed forward, doffing his hat and raising his hand in a professional gesture for silence. "Listen, men: the Law will punish swiftly——"

A storm of jeers overwhelmed him, and, striving weakly to preserve his dignity, he was jostled back into the crowd.

"Come on, Zeb, open up, or we 'll smash your cage." The speaker was a prosperous citizen, incongruous as a leader of a mob.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Zeb Jenkins," shrilled a woman's voice. "She was always a good friend to you." This emotional appeal stirred the crowd.

"She was a friend of all, even of that cur we 're after. She don't get killed without him getting his." There was a general outcry of menace and approval.

"There never was n't a day she did n't help some poor guy."

"She visited yer derned old jail," one yelled, "and made it seem like home."

"Well, you ought to know, Bill," broke in a mocking voice. The ill-timed gibe brought forth a nervous laugh that was quickly shamed to silence. The prosperous citizen again turned to the crowd, and there was now a catch of feeling in his voice.

"She saved my little boy after the doctors gave him up. I don't forget, and I 'm going to see this through." In instant response, the mob pressed, threatening, toward the barricaded gateway.

"Cut it out, Zeb. You done all you could do."

The sentry-like figure thus addressed stretched out his arm in awkward supplication.

"Boys, don't try this. You can't do it, and somebody 'll get hurt. I tell you I 'll hold the jail—I 've *got* to. I 'll hold it if I die for it." During the resultant clamor the Sheriff continued to exhort them, though they did not heed him. Then his voice rose till they could not choose but hear. "Let me give you this!" he yelled. "I 've phoned to Exmoor for the State Police, and they 're comin' on the 9 : 16."

The intelligence brought back an angry roar that beat against the grim stone walls and echoed through the murky, tree-arched streets. The little town had never been stirred like this. Women's voices could now be heard, vindictive, implacable.

The tragedy that thus moved a whole community had taken from it its gentlest, best loved member. While on an habitual errand of mercy she had been waylaid and robbed, and the brutal hand that stilled her startled cry had clutched the tender throat too hard. The apprehended murderer was swiftly jailed; but the town went supperless, and would not sleep unless the object of its wrath slept soundest of them all.

"Make way there!" Six lusty youths suddenly broke through the crowd, among them swinging a battering-ram of steel whose impact must shatter the barricaded gate. The crowd closed in behind them, pushing and cheering. There was a warning shout from the Sheriff, a shot, and the rail clattered to the stones before the unscathed bars. A man with a splintered knee was carried away, and the sight of blood aroused a new and deep resentment. The Sheriff had by this act become their enemy. They no longer hailed him as "Zeb," nor wasted friendly counsel, but sought to slay him. He had dared to shoot at them, and his life was forfeit.

From left and right shots flashed, and leaden flakes dropped harmless from the impassive wall. In the comparative quiet noises could now be heard from within the jail, the sounds of battered iron and muffled cries. Were the prisoners attempting to escape? Could they have learned that the victim of the new inmate had been the gentle little

lady whose ministrations had done most to keep them from losing all kinship with the outside world?

From somewhere off in the outer darkness came the owl-like hoot of the 9:16. A barrel of oil had been rolled close to the wall, and men were working at it in an effort to flood the gateway and burn their way into the jail.

"For God's sake, stand back!" warned the Sheriff. "I'll hold out, I tell you—I'll hold out now if I have to kill you all."

"This here fire won't die out till we roll the varmint in it," was the answering threat.

As the red flame leaped forward beneath a suffocating pall of black smoke, an agonized shriek rose, quavered, and slowly died in the tense air. Could that have been Zeb? No, there he leaped, back from the gateway into the jail. They could hear the approaching train slow down at the station. There was yet time to rush the gate.

Suddenly, swathed in smoke and flame, like a spirit condemned, stood the Sheriff. "You're too late, boys," he shouted, and the ring of comradeship had returned to his voice. "The cur you was after has got his. The gang o' convicts back there heard you tell who he killed, and they busted the day-room. There ain't a whole bone left in his body."

Up the street on the run, armed *cap-à-pie,* came the no-longer-needed police.

DAWN

BY MAHLON LEONARD FISHER

THE baby Day came creeping o'er the hill,
A slimmest prince in silver, in his eyes
All the hushed loveliness of light which lies
The lily's look within. He came so still
The slumbering birds were not disturbed until
He paused an instant in his wending: then
They woke in unison, as if, agen,
As yester, did his silken footsteps thrill
The tissue of their dreamy sleep, and so
Were startled by the stillness which befell!
Now one and now another note of bell,
In leafy steeple swung, began to flow
Adown the world—the throats of gold to sing
The perfect bliss a little Child will bring!

BABES IN THE WOODS

By Thomas Grant Springer

THERE was no sign, "Keep off the Grass," for it was an uptown park that Kent had wandered into, and it was not a lawn but a rocky, dusty imitation of a tiny bluff, whose slight rise seemed to shut out the brazen city. He threw himself down on the ragged grass that seemed to cover the earth like a worn carpet, but the earth was underneath, real earth, not asphalt, and he snuggled to it as if it was his mother's breast. A squirrel, impudent as a street gamin, begged to be fed, and when Kent ignored it waddled off in gluttonous disappointment. A pair of sparrows fluttered down beside him, wrangling like urchins. But the ragged grass made up in part for the sophistication of birds and beasts, and Kent snuggled close to it, rubbing his beard into it and trying to dream that he was lying on an open Western hill-slope, where the heat was tempered with the breath of a free wind, not merely stirred by warm puffs as it was here.

He had just enveloped himself in the hazy garments of a day-dream when a girl came slowly from the path and sat down on the grass a little way from him. At first glance, he was tempted to resent her intrusion, but as he unconsciously studied her, there was something in the listless droop of her shoulders and a certain hopeless pathos in her face that shamed him. A troop of tiny freckles now merging into the pallor of her cheeks told of the honest kisses of a country sun—kisses the city had not entirely bleached out. The scrupulous neatness of the unmodish dress proclaimed her a fellow-prisoner of the city streets, and as he watched her fingers twist themselves into the grass with a movement that was almost a caress, he felt a sense of kinship for her. Long he watched her, his desire to speak—an impulse he would have obeyed in his native West—being held in check by the conventions the city had laid upon him. He wagered that she was as lonely as himself; but this was a city park, not a country-side, so he held his peace.

He fancied that he saw her somewhere down in the San Joaquin Valley—for he knew nothing of the Eastern country—the daughter of a small rancher. He could imagine himself riding up under the spreading live-oak tree by the back porch, and her coming out with a gingham apron on and telling him with a smile that her father was off cutting alfalfa and *might* want a man to help him. And she would hand him

a dipper and show him where the pump was; then he would leave his horse standing in the shade and go off looking for the old man, guided by the smell of alfalfa as the sun steeped the pungent perfume from it. He closed his eyes, sniffing at the grass, and went on dreaming. It was that kind of sun that made that kind of freckles the city heat was wiping out. Under his curtaining lids, he saw the heat shimmering on the broad valley floor of the West. The sticky moisture of his skin seemed to become again the cooling perspiration that clearer sun drew out, the sun that made such freckles across a girl's nose. His deeper breathing drawing in the scent of the grass was gradually making his conscious dream more of a reality as sleep touched it, when he felt a tap on the sole of his shoe, and, sitting up quickly, found himself looking into the face of a policeman.

"Sorry," he said, but not unkindly, "but you can't lie on the grass here."

Kent rose slowly to his feet, and the policeman, noting the disappointment on his face, added, "It's a new rule. So many people are doing it now, it makes the grass die out."

Kent nodded and stooped for his hat as the officer moved off toward the girl. A moment later she and Kent stood in shy embarrassment on the walk, she red-faced, he shamefaced; then they both moved off to a bench a little way down the walk, and sat down, she at one end, he at the other. Each shot a sheepish glance at the other, and, their eyes meeting, strove to hide the embarrassment each felt. Kent pulled out a bag of Durham and a packet of brown papers, and rolled a cigarette. She began nervously clasping and unclasping the catch of a tiny grip she held on her knees. Suddenly it fell to the walk, Kent's cigarette following as he reached to return it. She thanked him awkwardly, and he stood nervously twirling his hat and shifting his weight from one foot to the other.

"Awfully hot, ain't it?" he said at length, striving to take advantage of the accident without appearing forward. She nodded her head and began playing again with the clasp of the grip. He waited a moment, mopping his forehead, then sat down, a little closer this time. After a moment's awkward pause, he cleared his throat determinedly, and said in a voice too evidently casual, "Sorry we had to get off the grass. I thought the signs were only for the lawns."

"So did I." Her voice was low and soft. Its memory thrilled him through the silence that followed.

"Out in 'Frisco you can sit on the lawn," he said at length, following his original lead.

"Are you from there?" she asked, in an almost cautious tone.

"No, I ain't exactly from there, but I'm from California—from the country," he added.

She smiled at him frankly. "I thought so."

Kent edged a little closer. "You are, too, ain't you?" he asked eagerly.

She nodded. "I 'm from Connecticut."

"I knew it."

"How?"

He laughed, then grew somewhat embarrassed.

"Do I look like a country girl?" she persisted.

"No, it was n't that. Promise you won't get mad?"

She nodded.

"Well, it was the freckles. You know, it takes real sun to make them. Why, when I first come here I was as brown as a greaser, and now I 'm gettin' all white, like a sickly girl. Seems as if there ain't anything to breathe in the air here."

"Why don't you go back west?" she asked softly.

He reddened and wiggled painfully. "Seems as if I can't get money enough, and it ain't so easy to work that way. You see, I only had one job drivin' team since I got here, but that played out, and I could n't get another."

She sighed. "Yes, I know."

"Ain't you working, either?" he asked quickly.

"Not now. I had a job in a laundry, but there was a strike."

"Why don't *you* go home, then? Connecticut ain't far."

She looked into his eyes, which were frank and clear as his own Western skies; so she told him—told him of her tiring of the old place and the old ways. She thought she could do something, and now she could n't go back beaten. Besides, there was little to go back to, as the farm was poor, and she had been expected to do her part, or at least—and then she hesitated—marry. So she had come to the city of great hopes and greater disappointments, and somehow could n't go back. "But of course it 's different with a man," she concluded.

"Yes," he agreed; "it 's different." And then he told her how he had worked his way east. He had thought there was money in the city, and the bigger the city, the more money, but now he knew it was not for him.

Then they talked on and on, drawn closer in their common love of the out-of-doors. They laughed at the fat squirrels that came begging, and Kent said he was ashamed of their being civilized. Then he told her of the wild things of the West that he had hunted, and she told him of the tame wilderness of the East she knew so well, while the hours became years with the things friendship crowded into them. They forgot they were chance acquaintances, for the city that lay behind the screen of dusty trees seemed far away, and the park path became a country lane where they had met for friendly gossip.

Bit by bit they grew more intimate. She told him of her cows, and

he in the broad vanity of the West boasted of the ranges he had ridden, a single one of which contained more head than all New England. From that, he confided how, with the passing of the ranges, it had been his ambition to have a ranch. One could rent one out there, or work it on shares, but somehow he had never settled down to it, possibly because there was no one to hold him. "But I 'm going back," he said. "The biggest city 's only taught me how little it is in every way. Why, there ain't no place in it for a man to really breathe."

"No, nor a woman either," she agreed.

Unnoticed by them under the shadows of the trees, the sky had darkened. The air was closer and more oppressive, full of a copperish haze that gradually thickened into clouds. Almost without warning, a clap of thunder sounded, and as they sprang to their feet there came the light patter of the first rain-drops.

"Say, this is kind of bad!" cried Kent. "I don't know any place to go around here. Guess I 'd better take you to a car."

She laughed a little nervously. "It 's only a shower. I don't mind it at all. I often got caught at home, and this is almost like the country."

He gave a quick glance around, then answered her laugh heartily. "It sure is, but there 's a niche in the wall yonder. We won't get wet there;" and, grasping her hand, he ran with her to the shelter.

They huddled close under the arch while the sudden shower descended. It was one of those quick patters that wash the dust from the leaves, freshen the grass, and mercifully clear the brazen oppression of the air when it becomes past enduring. They drank in the cleanness of it in deep breaths, knowing how temporary the relief was.

In a few moments the rain ceased, and they stepped out on the path again to note that the clouds had cloaked the sunset, and it was now clearing into twilight.

"Say, it 's getting late," said Kent. "If you don't board regular, why, let 's go somewhere and get something to eat. I have n't eaten with anybody I knew since I came to New York."

"Well, you don't know me," she said slowly, her first shyness returning.

"Why—why—I mean——" he hesitated; then they both laughed and as if by arrangement walked side by side down the path.

They found a dairy lunch on a side street, and, after a little urging, Kent was gratified to see her eat a good meal with a frankly keen appetite. They dallied over it as long as possible, but the freedom of the park was wearing off, and the restraint that the city imposes on those not wholly of it was settling on them.

"Well, I guess we better go," he said at last, and as they stopped at the counter he paid the check with a five-dollar gold piece.

"Western money, real money, and about the last of it," he said, rolling up the change in bills as they stepped out.

They passed the park, no longer posing as the country, but frankly proclaiming itself with its yellow lights set here and there, like lamps in a conservatory. They paused a moment on the sidewalk.

"It don't look like the real thing now, does it?" he asked; then added slowly, "I don't want to go in there again, do you?"

She shook her head.

"Well, I guess I better take you home."

She hesitated. "Why—why, I can go alone."

"Sure you can, but you won't."

She tried to resist him, but he laughed. "Now, I 'm not fresh or nothing, you know that, but where I come from a fellow don't let a girl go home alone."

She began to grow nervous. He had been too kind and need n't trouble, she said; but when she saw there was no other way but to offend him, she broke down and began to cry. Kent took hold of her elbows and drew her into the shadow of the hedge.

"Here, here, little girl," he said, "what is it? What 's wrong?"

"I—I have n't got any home," she sobbed.

"What do you mean?"

She held out the tiny grip. "That—that 's all I 've got. I—I could n't pay my board last week, I had n't any work, and—and I was ask to leave."

Kent's arm slipped round her, and she leaned against his shoulder, while the whole miserable story was sobbed out. She had intended to go to some institution—she had heard of such places—but the dread of actual charity had held her back. As he pieced together the story from the broken sentences, his mind went over the situation, and he patted her shoulder till she had gained control of herself.

"Now, listen to me, girl," and there was a note of tender authority in his voice, "I 've got a hall bedroom, an unbroken twenty, and what 's left of the five you saw, and next week I 've got a job to go to, or I would n't have been loafing in the park to-day. I 'm going to give up my room to you to-night and sit in this very park and dream till morning. I 'll tell the landlady, who 's real folks, that you 're my girl, and I 'm going to come for you in the morning, and we 're going to be married—and we *are*," he added vehemently.

She gasped. "You 're crazy! Why, you don't even know my name."

He gripped her hard. "It 's Kent to-morrow," he answered, "and I 'll stick to the job awhile, and we 'll save our money, and before this time next year we 'll be working eighty acres I know out in the San Joaquin, if you 're the girl I take you for."

And he knew she was as she lifted her face to his.

THE "MOVIES" IN CENTRAL AMERICA

By Caroline Lockhart

THAT no people or country are immune from the deadly germ of the "movie" is shown by the virulence with which the fever has seized upon the natives of Central America, who walk long distances and spend their last *real* for the privilege of yelling themselves hoarse over the pictures.

Whatever happens on the film is as real as life itself to the audiences made up of Spaniards, Indians, and Caribs, who at exciting moments rise in their seats, shouting admonitions to the actors, yelling encouragement to the noble heroes, and hooting the villains, until the theatre is like a gathering of excited Bedlamites.

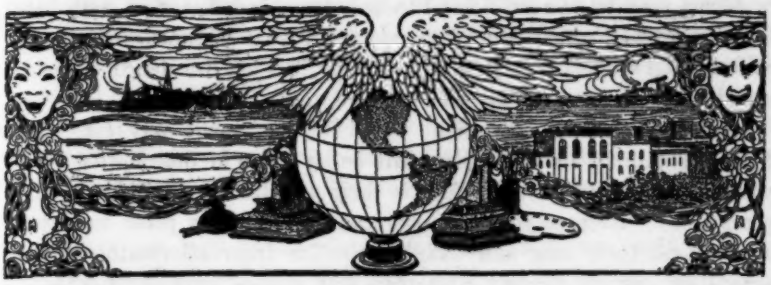
At La Ceiba, a port town on the east coast of Spanish Honduras, an enterprising priest opened a moving-picture show, giving The Passion Play on the opening night.

During the Last Supper it was no fault of the audience that the Apostles did not find out what kind of an *hombre* Judas was, as they were warned often enough from "the front," and told to "watch out!" While the crucifixion scene was enacted, several fat Señoras fainted and had to be carried out, but when Christ rose from the dead and came out triumphant from the tomb, they cheered him to the echo, all but yelling their heads off with shouts of "*Viva el Cristo! Viva el Cristo!*"

The western film, however, is the most liked and surest of a crowded house. The natives have come to think that the entire population of the United States is made up chiefly of cowboys, Indians, and soldiers, who spend their time chasing each other. The sympathies are always with the cowboy, and he is notified in plenty of time when the wily redman is waiting for him in ambush.

The spectators writhe in their seats and wring their hands when the Indians scale the stockade and the ammunition is exhausted save the single cartridge which the Colonel reserves for his beautiful daughter.

"*Hijo de Maria!* [Son of Mary!] Don't lose, old man!" they plead, with the tears all but streaming down their faces, and the "bravos!" and shrieks which split the air when a cloud of dust tells them the cowboys are riding to the rescue would stampede a band of Ogallalah Sioux.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

THE BROADER GAUGE

WHO watches his world must observe that it grows yearly less willing to be nose-led by convention. To be studiously unconventional is unclever, but to think and act for oneself in matters that concern oneself is what practical individualism means. We grow less puritanical, less sheep-like in morality.

It has been the habit for generations for women to invent banal little mysteries concerning too many things. Lest they be deemed ungenteel or "immodest," they have become puppets of tradition and hurlers of platitudes. Happily, during the last few years they have opened their minds and let in wholesome thought. Wise mothers no longer preach, nor cite maxims. Those who have travelled or lived in other countries have come to see the narrowness of what the English call the "middle-class view-point." The Sabbath is no less holy because churchgoers no longer return solemnly home to bemoan their sins, eat cold midday dinners, and create an atmosphere of gloom. We worship God none the less because we appreciate Nature more.

Mothers as truly deplore inebriety as did their foremothers, although they no longer point to the "adder at the bottom of the wine-cup." If they speak of bibbing, they casually indicate the unbecomingness of a red nose. The typical American father and husband prefers a cigarette smoked by any other woman than his wife or daughter, but he does not put a moral ban upon young matrons who think differently. Nor are fair faces so religiously watched. A *soupçon* of rouge is not the sign-manual

of unchastity, these happier days. Those who attend the play are not necessarily en route for nethermost parts. Novels dominated by sex problems used to be read behind locked doors and discussed with bated breath; not so to-day. Nor do maidens slip past costumeless statues in galleries and studios as from things unholy. Life has broadened, deepened, grown more worth while to those who are worth while.

Fewer things are forbidden. "Don't" has made way for "Do." Notwithstanding, the forbidden still bulks large in desirability to the young. To see, to know, to feel, is their ambition to-day as a hundred years ago. "Even as you have seen and known," they plead to Experience. Lest their sons and daughters suffer from aftermaths born of ignorance, certain modern wise men and women have covenanted together to satisfy the inquiring minds of children rather than to apply rods to the bodies of those who disobey prudish commands or step over chalked lines. Its own itinerary hereward is of immense interest to the intelligent child. The sooner it understands, the better, decides Modernity.

Mothers who once blushed before their children's inevitable queries blush now at their own erstwhile stupidity. The ability of a child of average mentality to grasp vital truths and see through conventional lies has not been properly accounted unto it. In lesser matters as in vital ones, clever parents of to-day keep ever in mind the danger of overemphasis. The chosen way is to ignore as much as may be tortuous ethics. When things must be gone into, mother and son, dad and daughter, chum together and settle sex differentiations in wholesome talks hitherto undreamed of.

Since no man will ever understand woman, and no woman, despite her superior sex perspicacity, will ever wholly fathom man, is it not an admirable idea that a maiden, tormented by a lover's vagaries, shall get a man's point of view, and that a lover, distraught over a woman's moods, shall ask his mother to adjust the focus in order to help him find the answer?

As the centuries circle apace, life becomes more complex, broadening daily. Minor erstwhile-sins are "follies," and serious errors more leniently dealt with than ever before. Self-analysis is less common than when Puritan ideals prevailed. If the world prays less, it thinks more.

The modern trend is toward frankness—not boldness, as some insist. Biology has done much to stamp out prudery. When the necessity arrives, men and women of to-day speak together of things that would have shocked their self-conscious ancestors. Yet women are as delicately womanly and men as thoroughly manly as when the Mr. Broadbrim and Miss Prim ambled along historic byways, or Sir Knight wore Her colors upon his shield.

MINNA THOMAS ANTRIM

NOTHING NEW IN STAGE VILLAINY

IN these days when the villain of various types has become, when not actually the hero, at least the "exciting force" of numberless dramas, we are quick to conclude that, because we call them crook plays and "crook" is a word of more or less modern coinage, the drama of crime is for that reason absolutely new. Not so. In all epochs of the English playhouse, the criminal and his lawless though consummate accomplishments have proved fruitful material for the ever-ready playwright.

In fact, far back in the days before the playhouse itself had yet been even foreshadowed, the thief was thought fit subject for the drama. And when, in the early middle ages, English comedy was born, whom do we find presiding at the birth but that calm and sly, impassive product of environment, the ingratiating scoundrel whom our own playwrights have but recently discovered anew and offered as a novelty. The "Second Shepherds' Play" of the Towneley cycle of miracle plays, dating from the second half of the fifteenth century, contains the first germ of English comedy. Crime provided that germ. Mak, the wily, sheep-stealing villain of this little religious play, was the very first captivating crook, the first romantic rogue in the English drama. He first illustrated for the stage, as does the criminal in the drama of to-day, Balzac's assertion that "men are neither good nor bad." A waggish, rascality-loving, clever youth he was, who, like Jackson Ives in "Ready Money," took an honest workman's pride in a dishonest calling.

The moral plays of the fifteenth century produced another early forerunner of the modern criminal. This was the Vice, originally a variation of one of the Seven Deadly Sins, "a child of the devil," who made life a hell for the devil himself, so hardily did he harass him. These Vices strove to overcome the Virtues, as the modern crook contends against the law. Later they merged into the "humours" which Jonson dealt with in so modern a realistic manner. Even old Ben Jonson tried his hand at the crook play. His "Alchemist" was the "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford" and the "Officer 666" of its day rolled into one. As in the latter, a rich man leaves town, entrusting his mansion to his servants; and, with a suavity worthy of Wallingford, the servants proceed to use it as a means of getting rich by twentieth-century methods.

But before Jonson's time, about 1575, came a "right pithy, pleasant, and merie comedie . . . played on the stage . . . in Christes Colledge in Cambridge," "Gammer Gurton's Nedle," the "Stop Thief" of its time. Like "Stop Thief," it gains its effects by the juxtaposition of real and supposed thieves. On the morning on which the play begins, while busily employed in one of the regular duties of those whose place is in the home—in this case reinforcing the trousers of her grandson,

Hodge, in all the most vulnerable places—Grandmother Gurton lost her precious needle. A great tragedy was that in the days when a needle was a treasure to be handed down through generations as an heirloom. The search for the needle occasions many clever and uproarious complications. The innocent, as in "Within the Law," suffer unjust accusation and unwarranted arrest; a peace-loving parson's stupid head is cracked as a result of his zealous intermediary efforts; the chief of police is put upon the case, and, unlike the stage police of to-day, does effective work. The cause of most of the trouble is Diccon the Bedlam, a half-witted, inscrutable rogue who lives by helping himself to the edible contents of the cupboards of his friends. He it is who sets all at last aright by simply slapping Hodge upon the leg. The slap elicits from the slapper a sharp cry. His hand has struck something pointed; and his howl of distress brings about the dénouement of the farce. The needle is revealed, sticking in the seat of Hodge's trousers. There it has been throughout the whole eventful day, where Gammer Gurton, woman-like, had left it in the morning.

All these examples of the playwright's use of crime in his dramas are, with the exception of the "Alchemist," found among the plays produced before Shakespeare began to learn his trade. To-day crime is crowding much of the love interest from our plays. But it is no newer to the drama than is love. Like love, crime is a subject of perennial interest to play-goer and play-maker alike.

ARTHUR POLLOCK

INCOMPETENT EMPLOYERS

ARE there such things as incompetent employers? We hear of poor business men, but that is not exactly the same as a poor employer. Incompetent employees, of course, seem to abound, for almost any one is able to tell of scores of them with whom he has had dealings, and many are the troubles that are blamed upon them. But, as we go along the streets and about our business day by day, nobody ever mentions the incompetent employer either in scorn or in pity. Nobody writes dissertations about him. To all intents and purposes, he does not exist. And yet it is not at all likely that all employers are perfectly competent. There must be some among them who ought to be given their walking papers or otherwise relieved of their responsibilities.

Won't somebody look into the matter? Are there incompetent employers? If so, what are the causes of, the character of, and the cure for their incompetence?

ELLIS O. JONES